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IMPRESSIONISTIC ART IN LE VENTRE DE PARIS OF EMILE ZOLA

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INTRODUCTION

The literature and art of an age are, by virtue of the similar political, social and religious factors that caused their creation, often closely related. In a movement such as Romanticism the interrelationships of the creative arts are clearly seen, but they are perhaps more difficult to perceive in artistic movements that have neither the duration nor the universal nature of Romanticism. Such were the literary and artistic movements in France from the Second Empire to the end of the century. During that period every aspect of society underwent, in varying degrees, a radical change, a change, as Hauser indicates, "that was more pronounced than in all the centuries since the beginning of modern urban civilization."¹ This reorientation of society produced a subsequent literary and artistic reorientation that can clearly be seen in the literary and artistic artifacts of the period. The Second Empire, which produced the art of Courbet, Flaubert, Corot and Beaudelaire, is, at the same time, the society out of which would develop the art of Zola, Manet, Monet and Huysmans. These post-romantic artists and writers, in spite of the very distinct differences among their creations, all illustrate in their works, in varying degrees, a similar characteristic--a tendency towards a greater realism.

¹Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art Vol. 4 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 62

This evolution towards realism in nineteenth century France, partially the result of a loss of faith in traditionalism and romantic idealism, was equally the result of the crass civilization of the Second Empire, a society that came to the realization that imitation was more valid than perception in the creation of art and literature. It was a generation innondated with scientism and technology, that would, in the twentieth century, permeate the creative arts to such a degree that literature and art would no longer be founded on aesthetic principles. Yet before such an evolution would take place, literature and art would experience a series of evolutions that have been labelled by literary and art historians as literary and artistic realism, literary naturalism, artistic impressionism, and literary and artistic symbolism. Such terminology attempts, however, to create what is not possible to achieve when dealing with the creative arts--conformity. This traditional and fragmentary approach to the creative arts obscures and in many cases denies the presence of similarities in style and technique among writers and artists of a particular age. Such is the case with what has been called literary naturalism, as exemplified in the novels of Emile Zola, and artistic impressionism, as exemplified in the canvases of Renoir, Monet, Manet, Sisley and Pissarro.

Both of these phenomena flourished in France after the fall of the Second Empire; both symbolize the rise of the lower bourgeoisie; both represent a type of realism; and

both were created, in a large part, by a group of men who knew each other, and who, in their private lives, freely exchanged aesthetic and stylistic ideas. Yet these two movements in the creative arts in the late nineteenth century in France are traditionally considered to be totally distinct and separate phenomena. It is the contention of this thesis that they are not unrelated movements in the creative arts.

In an attempt to demonstrate that they are, in fact, constructed with an identical artistic technique the principles of art history are useful, in that they provide a means of better understanding the technique used to create the artifact. Such an approach is underlined by Hatzfeld "as imperative in those cases where literary texts may contain structural elements that would perhaps remain obscure without the elucidation of the arts of design."² To approach a literary text by using the principles of art is perhaps more useful when dealing with periods of history characterized by a tendency towards realism, for it is in the plastic arts, as Hourticq explains, that this tendency, i. e. realism, is always first expressed:

Ce sont les oeuvres de la plastique qui forment le goût, fixent le jugement esthétique--qui plus que la nature établissent une norme pour nos jugements de vérité et de beauté. Cette correspondance du style d'une école et du goût d'une génération trouve sa confirmation dans les témoignages littéraires. Deux catégories de monuments nous renseignent sur les variations de l'esthétique collective, les oeuvres des artistes et celles des écrivains.

²Helmut Hatzfeld, Literature Through Art (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), p. 211.

Il apparaît alors, avec évidence, que dans les époques d'invention pittoresque ou plastique, c'est des ateliers que partent les initiatives et non des jeux philosophiques; les formes naissent du métier et non de la pensée; créer, c'est réaliser une idée, mais c'est la main qui la cherche et quand l'esprit la reconnaît, c'est après qu'une main l'a découverte. Les littératures réalistes et descriptives ne peuvent fleurir que sur un public formé à l'observation des images de la nature ou de l'art par les arts figures--alors, le lecteur retrouve dans les mots ses réminiscences visuelles.³

A certain chronological discrepancy is therefore often noted among the creative arts in periods of realism. Hauser underlines this point as follows: "The most productive period of a realistic form of art is often completely past when the ramifications of the painterly stylistics and aesthetics begin to emerge in literature."⁴ Such is the case with impressionism in literature in the nineteenth century in France.

A precise understanding of the aesthetic and stylistic principles of impressionistic art, principles with which Emile Zola was totally familiar through his close associations with the impressionistic artists, and which, in all probability were fundamental in the formation of Zola's own stylistic and aesthetic principles, is, therefore, essential in order to understand the novelistic technique of Emile Zola. For it is only by a systematic and careful analysis of the stylistic and aesthetic principles of the artistic media that a valid correlation of the fine arts in any

³Louis Hourticq, L'Art et la littérature (Paris: Flammarion, 1946), pp. 36-37

⁴Hauser, p. 880

period can be made. The conclusion of this study may show that Emile Zola, considered the most important naturalistic writer in the nineteenth century in France, utilized in the creation of his novels a technique not unlike that of the impressionistic artists.

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ARTISTIC IMPRESSIONISM

Impressionism in art as an historical phenomenon of the nineteenth century has been clearly defined. It represents the artistic effort of a relatively small group of artists in France during the decade 1870-1880. Yet to consider impressionism in art solely as an historical phenomenon is, in a sense, to deny its essence. Impressionism is at the same time an aesthetic phenomenon, which coinciding with the historical phenomenon of impressionism produced an eternal moment in art. In other words, the principal impressionistic artists utilized in the creation of art the impressionistic aesthetic during the historical period generally considered as being the age of Impressionism. A writer such as Gide, for example, utilized what may be considered as "classical" aesthetic in an historical period that is not generally considered by literary historians as an age of classicism. Gide therefore does not represent the phenomenon of classicism in entirety since the historical and aesthetic phenomena of classicism do not coincide. As such Gide's aesthetic is not pure, that is, it is not the aesthetic of the seventeenth century since it has been colored by the historical difference. The impression-

ism of the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, represents an eternal moment in art in that the aesthetic and historical phenomena of impressionism both coincide.

Fundamental to the aesthetic idea of impressionism is a philosophy of movement that closely resembles that of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who maintained that the universe is constantly changing and that the only constant is change itself. The Heraclitian symbol of flux, fire, was interpreted by the impressionists as a flow of water, a river, as expressed by Leibniz, into which you cannot step twice. Donald McGinn, in underlining the Leibnizian concept of flux as the basis of impressionism, views the art of impressionism as a type of Proustian recreation of the past:

As the river of time constantly flows on the present moment is irretrievably lost, except perhaps in memory. Thus the moment of inspiration that the artist experiences will never return, but through his art he has the power to give it a permanence that it could never actually possess--not the permanence of fact but rather the permanence of a momentary sensation forever captured in the work of art itself.⁵

Every impressionistic canvas thus represents a unique moment in the perpetuum of time. It is the triumph of the momentary over the permanent; it is the representation of a unique moment selected from a dynamic and constantly changing reality--a reality where chance is the principle of all being and wherein the truth of the moment invalidates all other truths. Yet impressionism represents a comprehen-

⁵Donald McGinn, Literature as a Fine Art (White Plains: Peterson, 1959), p. 303.

sive view of reality, for it directly involves a person in immediate interaction with all phases of his environment. The impressionistic artist must therefore take into account not only the immediately perceived external objects but also personal feelings and remembered sensations as they merge with the external elements in the situation. The past, present and future are then implicit in the flow of the immediate experience. The impressionist, in order to describe the present momentary state of an organism must consider its past history, and future state in order to portray the present, which is merely a point of passage, a moment "chargé du passé et gros de l'avenir."⁶

A preoccupation with the momentary as opposed to the permanent, the fundamental aesthetic principle of impressionistic art, has been underlined by Hauser as the basic experience of the nineteenth century.⁷ Zola, perhaps the most influential critic of the art of impressionism, recognized the importance of the momentary as opposed to the permanent in impressionistic art: "On doit saisir la nature dans l'impressionnisme d'une minute. Il faut fixer à jamais cette minute sur la toile."⁸

⁶Charles Hartung, Browning and Impressionism (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1953), p. 31

⁷Hauser, p. 925

⁸Emile Zola, "Le Naturalisme au Salon" Le Voltaire, June 18-22, 1880. Reported by Lionello Venturi, Les Archives de l'impressionnisme. Vol. 2 (Paris:Durand-Ruel, 1939), p. 279.

The manner used by the impressionists to represent in a work of art a fleeting moment chosen from the perpetuum of time was dictated primarily by the historical situation in France following the fall of the Second Empire, the moment in Taine's conception of the term. It was an age during which an emphasis was placed on the simple and the ordinary and not on the monumental and the exceptional, an era dominated by a certain respect for the working classes. These societal reorientations are clearly reflected in impressionistic art--an art which portrayed simple trees instead of monumental ones, an art which portrayed simple peasants at work instead of the nobility at leisure. One need only compare the deliberately ostentatious "Coronation of Napoleon" by David and the "Death of Sardanapalus" by Delacroix to the unpretentious canvases of the impressionists, such as the "Spring Trees by a Lake" by Monet and the "Woman Scratching" by Degas, to realize the almost banal quality of the subjects chosen by the impressionistic artists.

Developping concurrently with a preoccupation with the ordinary was an age of technology and science which would significantly transform what had formerly been primarily cultural centers into industrial cities in our modern sense of the term. The city would become a huge sprawling organism inhabited by the masses of humanity, the lower bour-

geoisie--men who were becoming fully cognizant of their role in a huge and intricate urban machine. The cities, as Hauser indicates, form the soil in which the new art is rooted:

Impressionism is an urban art and not only because it discovers the landscape quality of the city and brings painting back from the country to the town but because it sees the world through the eyes of the townsman who reacts to external impressions with the overstrained nerves of a modern technical man. It is an urban style, for it describes the changeability, the nervous rythm, the sudden, sharp, but always ephemeral impression of city life.⁹

It represents, as Hauser has shown, the two basic feelings which life in such an environment produces, the feeling of being alone and unobserved on the one hand, and the impression of roaring traffic, incessant movement and constant variety on the other--a feeling not unlike that expressed by Baudelaire in that section of Les Fleurs du Mal entitled "Tableaux parisiens", nor unlike the sensation expressed by Apollinaire in the cubist poem "Zone".

Impressionism is the realization that the world of experience is not permanent, a realization that in order to portray the only constant which actually exists, time, required a reduction of the artistic representation to the mood of the moment. Such an attitude is viewed by Hauser as a "fundamentally passive outlook on life",¹⁰ that is,

⁹Hauser, p. 871

¹⁰Ibid., p. 873.

the artist is a spectator of the dynamic world of experience and not, as the classical artists had assumed, the creator of a reality totally outside the limits of time. The impressionistic artist is non-involved, receptive and contemplative, the antithesis of Hugo and Lamartine, for example, who espoused both a humanitarian and a poetic ideal. The impressionistic artist represents, in short, as Hauser has demonstrated, the aesthetic attitude purely and simply: "Impressionism is the climax of a self centered aesthetic culture and signifies the ultimate consequence of the renunciation of the active life."¹¹

From such a standpoint of aloofness the impressionistic artists understood or perhaps saw more clearly the myriad effects of the developing age of technology they witnessed around them. They, in fact, used science as the basis of their artistic technique. As their principal tool they chose light.

While painting near the Seine at Argenteuil, Monet, Renoir and Pissarro observed numerous colors in the reflexes of light on the water, which, they observed, showed continual movement and life. This observation suggested to them the possibility of expressing light in their canvases by opposing colors. In their early works they portrayed only water in this new manner; the remainder of the canvas was executed

¹¹Ibid., p. 873.

in the old realistic tradition. The result was unbalanced canvases. To correct this unbalanced effect they began to realize every element of their canvases in the manner in which they had formerly portrayed only water. The images they observed and represented were not abstract in form nor were they in *chiaroscuro*, but in reaction to the reflexes of light. They had selected only one element from nature, light, to interpret all of nature. Light, then, was no longer an element of reality. It became the essential principle of their style and at that moment impressionism, historically and aesthetically, was born.

Using light as a means of approaching reality meant a revolutionary emphasis being placed upon the visual moment in art. The result, as Reutersvard explains, was a sensual aestheticism, that is, from a standpoint of aloofness and contemplation the impressionistic artists represented a dynamic reality utilizing not an intellectual approach but one based solely on the senses, primarily sight. Reutersvard underlines this point as follows: "Painting was to be upheld by the geniuses of sight who could master the world as a visual appearance and reproduce it in detail."¹² Impressionism is then an offspring of Comte's philosophy wherein everything is dismissed that does not result from positive sensual experience. The canvases of the impressionists were pro-

¹²Oscar Reutersvard, "The Accentuated Brush Stroke of the Impressionists" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Baltimore; Waverly Press, March 1952), p. 277.

pounded as being, as Reutersvard explains, "scientific reports of chromo-luminaristic conditions in nature, the decomposed structure was said to correspond with the disaggregation of sunlight into different prismatic elements."¹³ Through sunlight the observed color in nature was reduced to a multitude of small touches of color which when recreated on a canvas would give rise to the color observed in physical reality as a result of the chromatic fusion on the observer's retina. This reduction of color to small dots is referred to by Rewald as the "comma style"¹⁴ of the impressionists. By utilizing such a style the impressionists could record every nuance of the observed color in physical reality and at the same time indicate the particular moment as a result of the color produced by chromatic fusion, thereby recreating the moment of inspiration as it occurred in nature. Reutersvard underlines this point as follows:

The surfaces of their canvases were covered with a vibrating tissue of small dots and strokes, none of which by itself defined any form, yet all of which contribute to recreate not only the particular feature of the chosen motif but even more the sunny air which bathed it and marked trees, grass, and houses with the specific character of the day if not the hour.¹⁵

Not only did the impressionists reduce reality to a two dimensional surface, as Hauser explains, but within this two dimensionality to a system of shapeless spots,

¹³Ibid., p. 277

¹⁴John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943), p. 234.

¹⁵Reutersvard, p. 278.

therby destroying, to a certain degree, both a sense of the tangible and a sense of the limited:

Impressionism forgoes not only plasticity but also design, not only spatial but also linear form; that the picture makes up in energy and sensual charm for what it lacks in clarity and evidence is obvious, and that was the main goal of the impressionists.¹⁶

Impressionism, an art of reduction, not only alters but also distorts the colors of physical reality; since as Hauser remarks, the color perceived in nature through the senses may vary from the intellectually perceived or abstract color which is separated totally from a particular situation in nature.

Hauser states:

We think, for example, of a piece of white paper as being white in every lighting despite the colored reflexes it shows in ordinary light. In other words, the remembered color we associate with the object and which is the result of long experience and habit displaces the concrete impression gained from immediate perception; impressionism now goes back behind the remembered theoretically established color to the real sensation, which is in no sense a spontaneous act but represents a supremely artificial and extremely complicated psychological process.¹⁷

Impressionism was then contradictory to all previous art in that it rejected the concept of synthesis. It was, as Hauser has shown, the first time in the history of art that analysis became the basis of art. Impressionism is an analysis not only of reality reduced to a series of unique moments, but within this reality held in suspension in the artistic artifact the image was reduced to a series of color spots juxtaposed on the surface of a canvas.

¹⁶Hauser, p. 875.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 876.

The specific nature of this moment that the impressionists captured and held in suspension with their acute scientific eyes is determined wholly by their individual conception of physical reality. Their art corresponds to the aesthetic experience described by Kant, wherein "pleasure is related to the simple apprehension of the form of an object without referring this apprehension to a certain knowledge, the representation does not refer to the object but only to the subject."¹⁸ Inherent in this definition are two of the fundamental characteristics of the impressionistic moment--an anti-intellectual ideal and a search for beauty. In an attempt to understand better these two characteristics it is helpful to recall the lesson proposed by G.E. Lessing in 1776 in Laocoon wherein the possible goals of each of the creative arts are advanced. Art, as Lessing suggested, is to be directed solely at creating a pleasing illusion of what is, in the broadest terms, beautiful. Since perfect illusion is not the result of an exact reproduction of nature, it must therefore come from the artist's power to make the person viewing a work of art believe in the reality of the artistic creation. Lessing further demonstrated that each of the creative arts achieves illusion by a means appropriate to its medium. The creative artist, it would follow, must therefore explore the potentialities of his medium to the full while at the same time respecting the limitations of his art by refusing to allow any influences from

¹⁸Reutersvard, p. 276.

deflecting him from his main aesthetic purpose. Largely through the efforts of Lessing, art was liberated from its role as solely the servant or vehicle of religion and philosophy, whose aim was not simply to please but also to instruct. It would seem that such a proposal would hold as unaccountable much religious and contemporary Russian art, which are in many respects, vehicles for particular philosophic points of view. Yet neither religious art nor contemporary Soviet art violates the essential theory advocated by Lessing, whose thesis suggested that art may exist as an entity unto itself without a necessary didactic obligation, not necessarily denying the possibility that art could also be didactic.

The art of impressionism, in contrast to religious art, for example, is characterized by an absence of didacticism; as such the impressionists were not deflected from their main aesthetic purpose in any manner. As such, their art represents an enthusiastic search for beauty. This beauty they believed was to be found only in certain rare moments in a fluid reality: "Ils recherchent dans l'apparence mobile une éternité. Elle est cachée partout cette beauté qu'ils poursuivent et ils sont les premiers à le découvrir."¹⁹ In so doing they discovered, as Venturi states, "a new form of beauty where it had not

¹⁹Ruth Moser, L'Impressionnisme français (Geneve: Droz, 1952), p. 275.

been believed that beauty existed."²⁰

The immediate satisfaction they experienced in dealing with such a fluid and dynamic reality resulted in their finding, as Venturi explains, "a new form of appearance without pretending that their form of appearance was the form of reality."²¹ that is, as artists espousing an anti-intellectual ideal, their objective was not didactic, as in religious art, but aesthetic. As such, the attainment of beauty was their only preoccupation.

The reality portrayed by the impressionists in their canvases could be portrayed repeatedly since the particular reality portrayed in one impressionistic canvas represented only one of an unlimited number of moments that when seen collectively represent the complete history of the reality or object represented. The subject matter of one impressionistic canvas, that is, one of a series of canvases dealing with the same physical reality as for example, the Rouen cathedral or a particular lilly pond, becomes, in fact, secondary to the particular chromatic effect produced on it by the particular lighting of a specific moment. Gauss underlines this point as follows: "The subject matter retreats until it becomes no longer subject matter but a perpetual motif over which numerous variations can be played."²² These motifs, the

²⁰Lionello Venturi, Art Criticism Now (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1941), p. 111.

²¹Ibid., p. 112.

²²Charles Gauss, The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1949), p. 22.

Rouen cathedral for example, become, as a result of their continued repetition, symbols and thereby provide the impressionistic artist with unlimited subject matter. The same effect is achieved musically by Ravel in Bolero, which, though appearing to be monotonous repetition, represents a skillful presentation of a motif in impressionistic music created by a reoccurring theme with variations. Each variation on the essential theme, the motif, represents a musical tableau in much the same manner that the painting "Cathédrale de Rouen sous le soleil" by Monet represents an artistic tableau. The impressionist, whether a composer or an artist, can thus portray the motif repeatedly since each tableau represents only one moment in the history of the particular reality.

In their canvases the impressionists, as artists espousing an anti-intellectual ideal, portrayed not all of reality but only one aspect of reality--the beautiful. Their aim was not to make a judgement of reality but instead to present it as they conceived it to be. They were, in short, anti-intellectual, optimistic, and from Emile Zola's point of view, naive in their presentation of reality. The reality they portrayed was considered naive by Emile Zola for it consisted of only the striking and the beautiful, and not all of reality. Yet the impressionists, fully engaged in their roles as artists, had to be content to see only the striking and the beautiful. To have done more would have been to attempt a result outside the realm of art. Zola criticized their incomplete portrayal

of reality as follows:

Le grand malheur c'est que pas un artiste de ce groupe n'a réalisé puissamment et définitivement la formule nouvelle qu'ils apportent tous épaisse dans leurs oeuvres. La formule est là, divisée à l'infini; mais nulle part dans aucun d'eux on ne la trouve appliquée par un maître. On peut leur reprocher leur impuissances personnelles, ils n'en sont pas moins les véritables ouvriers du siècle. Ils ont bien leurs trous, ils lachent trop souvent leur facture, ils se montrent incomplets et impuissants; il leur suffit de travailler au naturalisme contemporain pour se mettre à la tête d'un mouvement et pour jouer un rôle considérable dans notre école de peinture. ²³

Zola, in praising their method, criticized the reality that the impressionists portrayed as incomplete and unfinished. Yet to the impressionists point of view their canvases were finished; for they had changed traditional form in order to find a form adapted to their coloring. They again found that simultaneous vision of color and space that had been in part destroyed by a prejudice in favor of drawing. To avoid virtuosity they therefore stopped finishing when they had arrived at light and color. It was this incompleteness that caused their immense popularity; ironically, it was at the same time the cause of their subsequent failure. For impressionism failed as Zola had predicted it would:

Ce sont tous des précurseurs, l'homme de génie n'est pas né. On voit bien ce qu'ils veulent, on leur donne raison, mais on cherche en vain le chef-d'oeuvre qui doit imposer la formule et faire combler toutes les têtes. Voilà pourquoi la lutte des impressionistes n'est pas encore abouti; ils restent inférieurs à l'oeuvre qu'ils tentent, ils bégayent sans pouvoir trouver le mot. . . Il ne reste plus si l'on veut avancer encore qu'à se remettre à l'étude des réalités et à tacher à

²³Reported by Lionello Venturi, Les Archives de l'Impressionism, p. 280.

les voir dans des conditions de vérité plus grandes. Tous leurs efforts doivent tendre à rendre leurs oeuvres plus fortes, plus vivantes en donnant l'impression complète des figures et des milieux.²⁴

Yet impressionism could not by its very definition fulfill the requirements imposed by Zola, for he had imposed on art demands totally outside the realm of art; he had imposed objective truth on a group of artists who excluded everything conceptual from their particular world view, a group who, without a doctrine or manifesto, produced, as Zola called them, "des oeuvres heureuses."

Ce fût bien là la tragédie artistique de 1880; les impressionnistes eurent gain de cause sur la critique qui après les avoir bafoués, les apprécia; ils pénétrèrent dans le Salon. Mais ils se modifièrent aussi.²⁵

For in accepting certain principles that had been opposed to them they were no longer sensationalists--impressionism had become the preoccupation of a group of doctrinaires who opposed the order of reason on the irregularity and variety of sensations of the impressionists. Impressionism, the artistic symbol of the rise of a new class to human consciousness, was in the end denied existence by the very group which had encouraged its creation. The lower bourgeoisie no longer could nor would accept sensationalism as the basis of art--the reason of mathematics had displaced the subjectivity of the artistic perception. Impressionism had, in a sense, des-

²⁴F.W.J. Hemmings, Zola (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p.416.

²⁵Venturi, Les Archives de l'impressionisme, p. 55

troyed itself in converting a whole civilization to its taste. This would not be realized until 1910, when an historical perspective would show that impressionism had, in fact, been dead for thirty years.

Yet before the self-annihilation of impressionistic art, an art of sensual aestheticism based on the principles of modern science and imbued with an anti-intellectual optimism in an attempt to portray an eternity, artistic impressionism would permeate and alter significantly the existing literary aesthetic. An analysis of Emile Zola's associations with the impressionists and his criticism of their art will demonstrate the formation of a new literary aesthetic, based in a large part, on the aesthetics of impressionistic art.

CHAPTER II

EMILE ZOLA AND ART CRITICISM

Emile Zola's affiliations with the impressionists and their art can be traced to his youth in Aix-en-Provence where Zola was a classmate of Paul Cézanne, who several decades later would be considered with Giorgione, Caravaggio and Manet as one of four giants in the creation of modern art. It was in fact Paul Cézanne who first introduced Zola to modern art by availing himself as a type of mentor and critic as he conducted Zola through the Salon des Refusés, an exhibition of canvases in 1863 that had been rejected by the academy as unrepresentative of French art, and who, upon Zola's arrival in Paris, introduced him to Camille Pissarro, Bazille and Monet.

As in other eras of artistic and literary creation in France, the new art of the 1860's was conceived in a café-- in this instance the Café Guerbois (11, Grande rue des Batignolles; now, 9, avenue de Clichy) in the Batignolles district of Paris. It was there that Zola would, in the presence of Bazille, Fantin-Latour, Degas, Renoir, and Manet, listen to the leading critics of the new art, Paul Duranty and Philippe Burty, and where Zola would himself discuss the new art with the artists who created it, primarily Fantin-Latour, Degas, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, and Antoine Guillemet, a landscape

painter in the tradition of Corot and Courbet who on May 7, 1866 took Zola to visit Manet in his studio and to study the canvases displayed there as a private exhibition by the artist. Zola, having recently published La Confession de Claude, heard from the master himself, as Hemmings relates, the story of Manet's artistic apprenticeship. Their meeting was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. The enthusiasm with which Zola early acclaimed the canvases of Manet can be seen from the following remarks made by Zola in his first Salon published in L'Evenement illustré on May 6, 1866:

Puisque personne ne dit cela, je vais le dire, moi, je vais le crier. Je suis tellement certain que M. Manet sera un des maîtres de demain, que je croirais conclure une bonne affaire si j'avais de la fortune en achetant aujourd'hui toutes ses toiles. Dans dix ans elles se venderont quinze fois plus chères. La place de M. Manet est marquée au Louvre comme celle de Courbet. . .²⁶

Zola again demonstrated his enthusiasm for the new art, particularly that of Manet, in a study written for the Revue du XIX^{ème} Siècle on January 1, 1867 entitled "M. Edouard Manet: Une nouvelle manière en peinture." After furnishing his readers with a short biography of Manet, composed of information supplied by the artist himself, Zola analyzed the artist's principal canvases. Not since Baudelaire's analysis of Delacroix had a writer given a more lucid analysis of an artistic technique:

L'aspect général (des toiles de Manet), je l'ai dit, est d'un blond lumineux. Dans la lumière diffuse les visages sont taillés à larges pans de chair, les

²⁶Reported by Henri Mitterand, Zola Journaliste (Paris: Colin, 1962), p. 68.

lèvres deviennent de simples traits, tout se simplifie et s'enlève sur le fond par des masses puissantes. La justesse des tons établit les plans, remplit la toile d'air, donne la force à chaque chose. On a dit par moquerie que les toiles de Manet rappelaient les gravures d'Epinal et il y a beaucoup de vrai dans cette moquerie qui est un éloge; ici, et là, les procédés sont les mêmes, les teintes sont appliquées par plaques, avec cette différence que les oeuvres d'Epinal, sans se soucier des valeurs, et qu'Edouard Manet multiple les tons et met en eux les rapports justes. Il serait beaucoup plus juste et intéressant de comparer cette peinture simplifiée avec les gravures japonnaises qui leur ressemblent par leur élégance étrange et leurs taches magnifiques.²⁷

In the following year Zola again defended, in an inverse manner, the art of impressionism in a series of articles which appeared in 1' Evenement illustre. The following criticism made by Zola of Meissonnier's canvases, although not mentioning the impressionists, can only be interpreted as a defense of impressionism:

Rien de plus délicat, de plus vif, de plus spirituel, de plus ferme, de plus précis, de plus parfait que les quatorze bouts de toile de Meissonnier au Salon-- mais il ne s'agit pas de peinture.²⁸

Zola's disdain for the official academy art was first expressed on April 19, 1865 when discussing the suicide of Jules Holtzapffel, an artist whose canvases had been rejected by the academy. In an article signed "Claude", Zola remarked:

Certes je n'affirme que le refus du jury ait seul décidé de la mort de ce malheureux. Il est difficile de descendre dans une âme humaine à cette heure suprême de suicide. Vraiment je ne voudrais pas avoir condamné cet homme.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

The preceeding remarks by Zola were in effect an open declaration of war against the academy jury whose members included Gerome, Cabanel, Meissonnier, Gleyre, Fromentin, Daubigny and Théophile Gautier. Zola at the same time attacked the traditional critics Ernest Chesneau, Louis Leroy and Edmond About. Those rallying behind Zola included Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Boudin, Bazille, Pissarro, Sisley, Morisot, Degas, Monet, Jongkind and the critics Castagnary (art critic for La Liberté and Le Nain Jaune) and the Marquis de Boissy. Zola, speaking for the new artists, stated on April 27, 1866 in L'Evenement illustre:

Il est donc bien entendu que le Salon n'est pas l'expression entière et complète de l'art français en l'an de grace 1866, mais qu'il est à coup sûr une sorte de ragoût, préparé et fricassé par vingt-huit cuisiniers nommés tout exprès pour cette besogne délicate. Je désire insister sur ce point. Le jury n'est pas nommé par le suffrage universel mais par un vote restreint auquel peuvent seulement prendre part les artistes exemptés de tout jugement à la suite de certaines récompenses. Quelles sont donc les garanties pour ceux qui n'ont pas de médailles à montrer? Ceux qu'il faut appeler au vote ce sont les inconnus. . . Je supplie à tous mes confrères de se joindre à moi; je voudrais grossir ma voix, avoir toute puissance pour obtenir la reouverture de ces salles où le public allait juger, à son tour, et les juges et les condamnés.³⁰

Zola's ardent campaign in favor of impressionistic art from its inception made him the champion of the impressionist cause. Proof of his popularity among the impressionists is provided, as Hemmings remarks, by the evidence of at least two impressionistic canvases painted in 1870, in both of which Zola

³⁰Ibid., p. 62.

is featured: Bazille's Atelier and Fantin-Latour's Atelier aux Batignolles. Zola further won the esteem of the impressionists by dedicating La Honte to Edouard Manet. The following dedication appeared in L'Evenement Illustré on September 1, 1868:

A Edouard Manet. Le jour où, d'une voix indignée, j'ai pris la défense de votre talent, je ne vous connaissais pas. Il s'est trouvé des sots qui ont osé dire alors que nous étions deux compères en quête de scandale. Puis-que les sots ont mis nos mains l'une dans l'autre, que nos mains restent unies à jamais. La foule a voulu mon amitié pour vous, cette amitié est aujourd'hui entière et durable, et je vous en donne un témoignage en vous dédiant cette oeuvre.³¹

In the period following 1870 Zola's associations with the impressionists become more difficult to perceive. His apparent withdrawal of active support of the new art came, as Hemmings has discovered, at a time when impressionism came most strongly under public attack and when need for advocates in the Parisian literary and artistic revues was more necessary than ever. The unpopularity of the new art during the early years of the Third Republic is demonstrated by the following account of a public auction held in 1875 in the Hôtel Drouot:

A sale held in 1875 in the Hotel Drouot occasioned scenes of such violence that the auctioneer was obliged to call in the police, while the canvases (72 of them, signed by Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Morisot) went for trifling sums, the total takings being little more than ten thousand francs.³²

Zola, reasonably affluent from the publication of L'Assommoir, soon became the almost exclusive financial supporter of the new

³¹Ibid., p. 78.

³²Hemmings, Zola, p. 408.

artists, who had neither private resources nor family wealth.

In the 1870's the Café Guerbois was replaced by the Café de la Nouvelle-Athènes in the Pigalle district as the focal point of the new art. Zola, having married, no longer frequented the cafés. He did however occasionally meet with the impressionistic artists in the office of his publisher Georges Charpentier, also a friend of the new artists. These infrequent encounters with the impressionists have led many critics to believe that Zola was growing disenchanted with the new art; others propose that Zola, completely engaged in novel writing during the decade 1870-1880 could not spare the time to visit the impressionist exhibitions or report on them. Both of these theories are, however, as Hemmings demonstrates, erroneous. He gives the following evidence:

In the immediate post war years Zola joined La Cloche as a parliamentary reporter. At the end of 1872 he transferred briefly to Le Corsaire, then in 1873, he wrote a number of articles, chiefly dramatic criticism, for L'Avenir National. The impression one has is that, for one reason or another, newspaper editors were reluctant to entrust to Zola the reviewing of the annual art exhibitions; his pre-war reputation as a fire-brand would not have commissioned him to the wary. During the latter half of 1873 and throughout 1874 Zola was unable to place copy with any newspaper except provincial ones like La Semaphore de Marseilles. The fortune of a free lance journalist in these early years of the Third Republic, when the government kept the press under strict surveillance were precarious particularly for one of Zola's notoriety. The theory that his silence betokened a disinclination to commit himself in print about the new art clearly cannot be accepted universally.³³

If Zola could not publish in Parisian newspapers, he had the good fortune, as Hemmings has discovered, of being able to

³³Reported in F. W. J. Hemmings, "Zola, Manet et les impressionnistes" PMLA September 1958, p. 409.

secure outside of France an opening for his journalism. Through Zola's association with Turgenev he was able to sell in 1874 the serial publication rights of La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret to the Saint Petersburg monthly magazine Vestnik Evropy. Then on January 18, 1875 Turgenev inquired of Stasyulevitch, the editor of Vestnik Evropy as to whether he would like to receive from Zola a regular Paris survey wherein Zola would devote his attention primarily to literary, artistic, and social matters. The Russian editor welcomed the idea and by December 1880, sixty-four "Lettres de Paris" appeared in Vestnik Evropy. Contained in the letters were studies of Sand, Balzac, Hugo, Musset, Gautier, Sainte Beuve, Stendhal, Taine, the French theatre, the contemporary French novel, and essays on French civilization and culture as well as extracts from L'Assommoir and Nana. The letter published in the June 1875 issue of Vestnik Evropy was a complete salon.

The salons written by Zola for the Russian public, unlike those published in France, contained lengthy material dealing with both the artists that were admired by Zola as well as those he disliked. His critique of Alexandre Cabanel's Naissance de Vénus, a canvas greatly admired by the leading salon critics in France, illustrates well the zeal with which Zola criticized works that affected adversely his aesthetic:

The picture has neither flaws nor merits; it breathes instead the most deadly mediocrity. It is art created out of the old formula refurbished by the adroit hand of an apprentice craftsman.³⁴

³⁴Ibid., p. 410.

Contained in the same "Lettre de Paris" as the devastating review of Cabanel's Naissance de Venus appeared the following statement on Manet:

Manet is primarily concerned with the truthfulness of the general impression and not with the finishing details that cannot be perceived from a certain distance. He possesses in addition a negative elegance; the sense of modernity is highly developed in him and his felicitous brush strokes make him at times a match for the Spanish masters. Incidentally his influence in our modern school is becoming more perceptible. If he is violently criticized he is also imitated. He counts as a master of his craft. Thus he stands at the head of a whole group of artists steadily expanding to which the future belongs. I repeat, the incomprehension of the public will be gradually dispelled and Manet will stand revealed for what he is in reality, the most individual painter in our time; the only one after Courbet who is distinguished by those truly original features heralding the naturalist school of which I dream the rejuvenation of art and the broadening of human creation.³⁵

Zola further acclaimed the genius of Manet in the fifteenth "Lettre de Paris". His praise of Manet was inspired by the fact that one of Manet's works had been rejected by the academy as inappropriate for exhibition in the salon:

It is understandable that the painting's submission should have exasperated the jury--the scene is set outdoors, the tones are vigorously defined, the outlines merge in the play of light. Certain cavalling critics will never forgive Manet for having barely indicated the washerwoman's face. Two dark spots represent the eyes, the nose and lips are shown as mere pink strokes. I realize why such a picture should cause irritation, but for my part I find it most curious and original. . . . What in particular vitiates critical opinion about Manet is that people will never be content to judge him simply as an artist--He paints people in a manner prescribed in the academies for painting inanimate objects. What I mean is that he never devises,

³⁵Ibid., p. 410.

never composes. Do not expect from him anything but a literally accurate rendering. He is a naturalist, an analyst. He cannot rhapsodize or philosophize. He can paint and that is all, and this is so rare an accomplishment that thanks to it he is the most original artist in the last fifteen years.³⁶

In a letter published in the following year Zola's praise of the new art was expanded from a praise of only the canvases of Manet to include the works of the entire group of impressionists:

On les appelle impressionnistes parce que certains d'entre eux paraissent vouloir rendre surtout l'impression vraie des êtres et des choses sans descendre dans une exécution minutieuse qui enlève toute sa valeur.³⁷

Contained within the same letter was the following statement about Caillebotte's Jeune homme à la fenêtre:

It is a thoroughly anti-artistic painting, a painting as limp as glass, bourgeois, thanks to the exactness of the rendering. The photographing of reality when it is not distinguished by the original stamp of the artist's talent is a sorry thing.³⁸

The preceeding critique reveals a fundamental aspect of Zola's aesthetic, that is, the exact rendering of reality in a work of art without the original stamp of the artist's talent, as in the conventional creations of the official academy artists, affected adversely Zola's conception of art. As such Zola shows himself to be diametrically opposed to Proudon who believed that a work of art was without value when marked by the original stamp of the artist's talent:

Pour Proudhon l'oeuvre d'art est d'autant plus remarquable qu'elle porte moins la marque d'un artiste original. Proudhon prétend que l'oeuvre d'art doit être l'image

³⁶Ibid., p. 411.
³⁷Ibid., p. 412.
³⁸Ibid., p. 412.

anonyme d'une civilisation; le fruit naturel d'un état historique de la société, "le produit de la nation". L'écrivain, l'artiste, ne serait que l'agent obscur et presque inconscient des forces, des tendances, des rêves, d'un groupe social aussi étendu que possible. Pour Zola au contraire, l'individualité est la marque la plus précieuse de l'oeuvre d'art. Au-dessus du temple égyptien ou grec, au-dessus de la cathédrale du moyen âge, il met les chefs-d'oeuvre variés et individuels des grands artistes de la Renaissance et de l'art moderne.³⁹

Zola similarly disliked what he would call "academy literature". He criticized conventional literature in Le Roman Experimental as follows:

Le malheur est qu'ils (unoriginal writers) n'ont pas l'expression personnelle, et c'est assez pour les rendre à jamais médiocres. Ils auront beau entasser volumes sur volumes, user et abuser de leur incroyable fécondité, il ne se dégagera jamais de leurs livres qu'une odeur fade d'oeuvres mort-nées. Plus ils produiront même, et plus le tas moisira. Ces romanciers prennent le style qui volent autour d'eux. Ils attrapent les phrases dans l'air. Jamais les phrases ne sortent de leur personnalité; ils les écrivent comme si quelqu'un par derrière, les leur dictait; et c'est peut-être ça qu'ils n'ont qu'à ouvrir le robinet de leur production. Sans copier, ils ont, au lieu d'un cerveau créateur, un immense magasin rempli des phrases connues, des locutions courantes, une sorte de moyenne du style usuel. Ce magasin est inépuisable, ils peuvent y prendre à la pelle pour couvrir le papier. En voici, en voici encore! Toujours, toujours de pelletées de matières froides et terreuses, qui comblent les colonnes des journaux et les pages des livres.⁴⁰

The impressionists, on the other hand, in representing in a canvas the reality they observed with their acute scientific eyes, satisfied Zola's demand for originality in that they had changed traditional artistic form in order to represent visually

³⁹Philippe Van Tieghem, Les grandes doctrines littéraires en France (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 1965), p. 233.

⁴⁰Emile Zola, Le Roman Experimental (Bernouard:Paris,1927), pp. 173-174.

the reality they observed. It was their technique of representation that was so highly acclaimed by Zola--a technique fundamental to the art for art movement which required total anonymity in a work of art and therefore the complete absence of the artist from the artistic or literary creation. As such the impressionistic artists and Emile Zola represent the midpoint in the stylistic evolution that began with Gautier and culminated in the sonnets of Mallarmé, that is, the impressionists and Zola represented in their creations scientifically documented renderings of reality, yet they both had changed traditional forms of representation in order to remain faithful to their ultimate objectives. The conclusion of this thesis may show that it was a technique similar to that of the impressionistic artists that was utilized by Zola to represent verbally the reality he observed and documented as documented by his naturalistic objectives, a technique which perhaps overrides his essential naturalistic thesis--a thesis founded on the desire to represent reality objectively without the subjectivity of author intervention, yet which at the same time, as will be demonstrated in Chapter V, is characterized by the highly original and subjective stamp of Zola's talent. Hemmings, it would appear, does not fully understand the stylistic principles used by Zola, when he states:

Zola never succeeded in reconciling intellectually his demand for submission to objective reality (naturalism) with his equally strongly held craving for originality;

which could only manifest itself in an aesthetic refashioning of reality.⁴¹

Hemmings has failed to perceive the technique used by Zola to aesthetically refashion reality--it is a technique that perhaps is not unlike that used by the impressionists, a technique recognized by Zola in the canvases of Manet:

Manet is a modern artist, a realist, a positivist--but the significance of his achievement lies less in his choice of contemporary everyday subjects than in the circumstances that the artist has created a new form for the new contents, and it is this new formula which frightens everyone.⁴²

Zola was at the same time disappointed with the impressionists. He stated:

I feel a great fondness for the innovators, for those who press forward violently, careless of compromising their aesthetic careers; only one thing can be asked of them--to continue unwaveringly the task they have embarked on and to find in their midst one or more painters sufficiently talented to reinforce with masterpieces the new artistic formula.⁴³

Yet the genius of impressionism for whom Zola was waiting and who, Zola hoped, would put the new artistic formula into practice did not and could not exist; for Emile Zola had imposed on art an objective that is totally outside the realm of art. He insisted:

Il ne reste plus si l'on veut avancer encore qu'à se remettre à l'étude des réalités et à tâcher de les voir

⁴¹Hemmings, "Zola, Manet and the Impressionists", p. 412.

⁴²Ibid., p. 410.

⁴³Ibid., p. 412.

dans des conditions de vérité plus grandes. Tous les efforts doivent tendre à rendre les oeuvres plus fortes, plus vivantes, en donnant l'impression complète des figures et des milieux, dans les milles conditions d'existence où ils peuvent se présenter.⁴⁴

Zola's insistence on the pursuit of truth, that is, a comprehensive portrayal of all reality in a work of art, however, was an impossible demand to impose on art, particularly impressionistic art, which devoid of all philosophic or didactic objectives, attempted only an aesthetic representation of reality. Yet Zola would insist on this point throughout his career as an art critic.

Even though the impressionists could not fulfill the goals imposed on their art by Emile Zola, he continued to praise their art, particularly their coloring technique. He remarked on April 19, 1877:

Ils voient tous la nature gaie et claire, sans le jus de bitume et de terre de sienne des peintres romantiques. Ils peignent le plein air, révolution dont les conséquences seront immenses. Ils ont des colorations blondes, une harmonie des tons extraordinaires, une originalité d'aspect très grande. . . avant quelques années on verra leur influence se produire sur les salons officiels eux-mêmes. L'avenir de notre école de peinture est là.⁴⁵

In the Salon of 1878, in which no impressionistic art was exhibited, Zola was nonetheless again to make a demand on the new art, as he had done in the preceeding year, that was outside the realm of art. His critique of the Salon of 1879 was breif, since

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 416

⁴⁵Reported in Mitterand, p. 183.

as he remarked: "exhibitions follow too closely for it to be of interest to study them in detail every year."⁴⁶ Despite the brevity of the Salon and Zola's disappointment that the man of genius had not yet appeared he allowed himself the following remarks on impressionism in general:

The impressionists have introduced open air painting--the study of the shifting effects in nature according to the innumerable variations of weather and time of day. They realize that the superb technical methods of Courbet can only produce magnificent pictures painted in the studio. They are pushing the analysis of nature still farther to the decomposing of light, the study of air in motion, of the interplay of colors, of chance modulations of light and shadow, of all the optical phenomena which make a panorama so mutable and so difficult to render. It is hard to realize what an upheaval is involved in the simple fact that painting is done in the open, that one has to deal with air in motion instead of shutting oneself up in a studio with a cold correct lighting entering a big window facing north. This is the coup de grace for classical and romantic painting, and what is more, this is the realist movement launched by Courbet and now released from the bondage of technique, broadened by analysis.⁴⁷

The final remaining piece of art criticism appeared in Le Voltaire June 18-22, 1880, entitled "Le Naturalisme au Salon", in which Zola, after praising the achievements of the new art, again called for the man of genius to come forth. This call cannot, however, in any sense be considered a final renunciation of Impressionism. Sufficient documents reveal that throughout the period 1865-1880 Zola maintained his enthusiasm for the new art, an art which he championed so ardently in the early 1860's and upon which he made impossible demands in the 1880's. During the

⁴⁶Reported by Hemmings, "Zola, Manet and the Impressionists", p. 413.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 414.

decade in which the art of impressionism fought the traditional jury of the academy Zola published four complete salons and four major reviews of exhibitions, both independant and public, all of which acclaimed the art of impressionism. Such a close affiliation with the world of art and a defense of its technique in all probability affected or perhaps transformed the form and content of the works produced by Zola during this period and throughout the remainder of his career. It may have been instrumental in the formation of his naturalistic thesis.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF LITERARY NATURALISM

In metaphysics and general philosophy, naturalism is used as the name of a major philosophic tradition and world view based on modern science. Naturalism, however, is more than a philosophic tradition or metaphysical doctrine--it is, as will be demonstrated, an aesthetic belief. As such it is seen by Munro as

a systematic application of the theories and methods of philosophic naturalism to the data and problems of art with such alterations and additions as the distinctive nature of the phenomenon may require.⁴⁸

In order then to underline the precise nature of the aesthetics of naturalism it is necessary to clarify the particular objectives and capabilities of each of the creative arts in question, that is, literature and art.

Art, unlike literature, is generally of two primary types--art existing as an entity unto itself and devoid of all didactic objectives (impressionistic art, for example), or art as a vehicle for a particular philosophic point of view (religious art for example). In other words, art whose only purpose is aesthetic and art whose purpose is both aesthetic and didactic. Art, when devoid of didactic objectives, represents what may, in the broadest terms, be considered as beautiful. Art created with a

⁴⁸Thomas Munro, "Meanings of Naturalism in Philosophy and Aesthetics" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism Fall 1960, p. 134.

particular didactic purpose and all literature, on the other hand, represent an intellectual approach to reality. Such an approach, in didactic art and in all literature founded on a certain aesthetic, represents an attempt by the writer or artist to present what may be considered, in the broadest terms, as the truth. It is the truth in that it represents the consistent and deliberate opinion of the author or artist in a work or a series of works which the reader or observer must assume to be a truth.

The preceding is true of all literature, particularly the literature created in France in the second half of the nineteenth century, an age permeated by a certain respect for science and the scientific method. Gabriel Vaucaire, a contemporary of Zola's appropriately summed up the prevalent scientific spirit of the age as the pursuit of truth:

Ah, le vrai, c'est la grande passion de notre âge,
l'éternel tourment de nos intelligences, le piédestal
sur lequel toute statue doit reposer.⁴⁹

He continues:

J'admets que notre generation positive soit tourmentée
d'un besoin d'exactitude que les époques précédentes n'ont
pas éprouvé au même degré. Il en est d'une société sur
le retour, comme d'un homme entre deux âges. A mesure
que son imagination s'amortit, le jugement, la reflex-
ion, le goût du vrai se développent en elle.⁵⁰

Zola, in his pursuit of what may be considered the truth, used as the basis of his method, modern science, realizing that if his novels were to be a true reflexion of the society pre-

⁴⁹Gabriel Vaucaire, "L'esthétique de Zola" Revue des deux mondes Vol XXI, 1924, p. 820.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 823.

sented therein that they must assimilate the spirit of the age. It was in fact a desire to represent the truth by utilizing a scientific method that underlines Zola's conception of the novel. Beuchat remarks in this connection:

Zola a écrit ses romans par souci de faire vrai, car il croyait que le romancier à l'instar du chimiste, n'a pour principes directeurs, que la veracité et la fidélité au réel.⁵¹

Zola himself underlined the necessity of presenting the truth in literature in Le Roman Experimental:

Ce sens du réel me semble très facile à constater chez un écrivain. Pour moi c'est une pierre de touche qui décide tous mes jugements. Quand j'ai lu un roman, je le condamne, si l'auteur me paraît manquer du sens du réel. Qu'il soit dans un fosse ou dans les étoiles, en bas ou en haut, il m'est également indifférent. La vérité a un son auquel j'estime qu'on ne saurait se tromper. Les phrases, les alinéas, les pages, le livre tout entier doit sonner la vérité. On dira qu'il faut des oreilles délicates. Il faut des oreilles justes, pas davantage. Et le public lui-même, qui ne saurait se piquer d'une grande délicatesse de sens, entend cependant très bien les oeuvres qui sonnent la vérité. De même qu'on disait autrefois d'un romancier: "Il a de l'imagination," je demande donc qu'on dise aujourd'hui: "Il a le sens du réel."⁵²

Zola further stated:

J'insiste sur cette déchéance de l'imagination, parce que j'y vois le caractéristique même du roman moderne. Avec le roman naturaliste, le roman d'observation et d'analyse, le romancier invente un plan, un drame, seulement; c'est un bout de drame, la première histoire venue, et que la vie quotidienne lui fournit toujours. Puis dans l'économie de l'oeuvre, cela n'a plus qu'une importance très mince. Les faits ne sont là que comme les développements logiques des personnages. La grande affaire est de mettre debout des créatures vivantes, jouant devant

⁵¹Charles Beuchat, Histoire du naturalisme français Vol. I (Paris: Correa, 1949), p. 14.

⁵²Zola, Le Roman Experimental, p. 169.

les lecteurs la comédie humaine avec le plus de naturel possible. Tous les efforts de l'écrivain tendent à cacher l'imaginaire sous le réel.⁵³

In assimilating this scientific spirit as a principle for the creation of a novel, Zola realized fully the utility of such an approach to literature:

Zola a compris le premier tout ce que la littérature pouvait attendre d'enrichissement et de vitalité neuve d'un tel domaine. Il a osé jeter un pont sur le précipice profond qui séparait les deux mondes scientifiques et esthétiques depuis toujours. Et l'on eût ce spectacle réjouissant et original d'un romancier travaillant méthodiquement dans l'immense laboratoire de la vie.⁵⁴

Literature would, at the same time, be aided in achieving its main aesthetic purpose by this assimilation:

Si le vrai a le droit d'être entendu, si l'art et la science non contents de vivre comme frère et soeur, doivent confondre leurs domaines, l'art sera fatalement absorbé par la science; tout ce qui masque devra disparaître.⁵⁵

Zola justified his use of science as the basis of literature in the following manner:

Nous nous ferions savant, nous emprunterions aux sciences leurs grands horizons, leurs hypothèses, si admirables qu'elles sont peut-être des vérités.⁵⁶

Utilizing science as a point of departure, Zola approached his study of man, the principal subject of all fiction, with the belief that human behavior can be reduced to a limited

⁵³ Zola, Le Roman Experimental, p. 166.

⁵⁴ Beuchat, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Vaucaire, p. 830

⁵⁶ Reported by Hemmings, Zola, p. 20.

number of fixed laws, just as the laws of the physical sciences are limited and fixed; the scientific novelist need only to conduct a sufficient number of experiments to deduce these laws. This belief that man's behavior was based on immutable laws was derived from Zola's reading of Hippolyte Taine's Introduction à l'histoire de la littérature anglaise wherein Taine states his thesis as follows:

Que les faits soient physiques ou moraux, il n'importe; ils ont toujours des causes, il y en a pour l'ambition, pour le courage, pour la véracité, comme pour la digestion, pour le mouvement musculaire, pour la chaleur animale. Le vice et la vertu sont des produits comme le vitriol et le sucre, et toute donnée complexe naît par la rencontre d'autres données plus simples dont elle dépend. Cherchons donc les données simples pour les qualités morales comme on les cherche pour les qualités physiques.⁵⁷

Taine thereby attempted to discover the causes and laws of literary creations. The determining factors being "race", "moment" and "milieu", which Taine defined as follows:

La race, ce sont ces dispositions innées et héréditaires que l'homme apporte avec lui à la lumière. Le milieu est fonction du climat et de l'organisation sociale. Le moment fait intervenir l'évolution historique; du fait seul des dates il résulte que les tragédies de Voltaire ne pouvaient ressembler à celles de Corneille.⁵⁸

Utilizing these essential determining principles established by Hippolyte Taine to explain literary creations, Zola established the necessary framework for a scientific approach to an analysis of human thought and action. The great debt of Zola

⁵⁷Reported by Hemmings, Zola, p. 155.

⁵⁸Reported by André Lagarde and Laurent Michard, XIX^{ème} Siècle (Paris: Bordas, 1962), p. 399.

to Taine was acknowledged by Zola in 1893 in an interview with Louis Trébor:

C'est vers l'âge de 25 ans que j'ai lu Taine et en le lisant le théoricien, le positivisme, qui est en moi s'est développé. Je puis dire que j'ai utilisée dans mes livres sa théorie sur l'hérédité et sur les milieux et que je l'ai appliquée dans le roman.⁵⁹

Equally influential in the formation of Zola's naturalistic thesis was the medico-sociological treatise of Prosper Lucas which Zola read in 1868, entitled: Traité philosophique et physiologique de l'hérédité naturelle, dans les états de santé et de maladie du système nerveux, avec l'application méthodique des lois de la procréation au traitement générale des affectations dont elle est le principe; ouvrage où la question est traitée dans ses rapports avec les idées primordiales, les théories de la génération, les causes déterminant la sexualité, les modifications acquises de la nature originelle des êtres et les diverses formes de nervopathie et d'aliénation mentale. In reading this treatise on heredity Zola supplemented the information on heredity and its laws that he had acquired from his reading of Taine. It allowed him to establish an hereditary framework wherein his principal characters would act throughout the Rougon-Macquart series:

Le livre de Lucas lui avait permis d'établir l'arbre généalogique des Rougon-Macquart et Zola y vit une Bible.⁶⁰

Zola's debt to Lucas as well as Taine is clearly seen in the

⁵⁹Reported in Hemmings, Zola, p. 55.

⁶⁰J-H Bornecque, Réalisme et Naturalism (Paris: Hachette, 1958), p. 58.

preface to La Fortune des Rougon wherein Zola states:

Je veux expliquer comment une famille, un petit groupe d'êtres se comporte dans une société, en s'épanouissant pour donner naissance à dix, vingt individus, qui paraissent au premier coup d'oeil, profondément dissemblables, mais que l'analyse montre intimement liés les uns aux autres. L'hérédité a ses lois, comme le pesanteur. Je tâcherai de les suivre en résolvant la double question des tempéraments et des milieux, le fil qui conduit mathématiquement d'un homme à un autre homme.⁶¹

In spite of the very definite references to Lucas' treatise on heredity and the teachings of Taine in the introduction to La Fortune des Rougon, some question has been raised by literary historians as to whether or not Zola utilized Lucas' treatise in formulating his overall plan for the Rougon-Macquart series.

Hemmings offers the following solution:

It is impossible to determine whether a reading of Prosper Lucas inspired Zola to choose the laws of heredity as the ones his novels would demonstrate or whether, having decided that all his main characters would have a common family origin, he thought of using Lucas' treatise to provide a veneer for scientific authenticity. In any case, it would appear that Zola was greatly aided by Lucas' findings.⁶²

With respect to the theoretical basis of Zola's experimental method in writing there can be little doubt--it is the experimental method expressed by Claude Bernard in Introduction à la médecine expérimentale. Bernard, opposing traditional medicine, proposed that the rigorous scientific method be applied not only to cadavres but also to living organisms. His objective being to find "les relations qui rattachent un phénomène quelconque à sa

⁶¹Emile Zola, La Fortune des Rougon (Paris: Fasquelle, 1871), preface.

⁶²Hemmings, Zola, p. 55.

cause prochaine, de trouver les conditions nécessaires à la manifestation de ce phénomène."⁶³ This meant a new emphasis being placed on the role of experimentation in the medical sciences--observation it was felt was no longer sufficient in studying biological phenomena as they applied to medicine. Bernard's experimental method in medicine was interpreted by Emile Zola as follows:

Faire mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière pour y montrer la succession des faits y sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude. . . prendre les faits dans la nature, puis étudier le mécanisme des faits en agissant sur eux par les modifications des circonstances et des milieux sans jamais s'écarter des lois de la nature. Le roman naturaliste sera une expérience véritable que le romancier fait sur l'homme en s'aidant de l'observation.⁶⁴

Zola further likened the naturalistic novelist to a physiologist operating on characters and their intellects:

Dès ce jour la science entre dans notre domaine, à nous romanciers, qui sommes à cette heure des analystes de l'homme, dans son action individuelle et sociale. Nous continuons, par nos observations et nos expériences, la besogne du physiologiste, qui a continué celle du physicien et du chimiste. Nous faisons en quelque sorte de la psychologie scientifique, pour compléter la physiologie scientifique; et nous n'avons, pour achever l'évolution, qu'à apporter dans nos études de la nature et de l'homme l'outil décisif de la méthode expérimentale. En un mot, nous devons opérer sur les caractères, sur les passions, sur les faits humains et sociaux, comme le chimiste et le physicien opèrent sur les corps bruts, comme le physiologiste opère sur les corps vivants.⁶⁵

⁶³Van Tieghem, p. 230.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁶⁵Zola, Le Roman Experimental, p. 22.

Zola acknowledged his great debt to Claude Bernard in Le Roman Experimental as follows:

Je n'aurai à faire ici qu'un travail d'adaptation, car la méthode expérimentale a été établie avec une force merveilleuse par Claude Bernard dans son Introduction à la médecine expérimentale. Ce livre d'un savant dont l'autorité est décisive, va me servir de base solide. Je trouverai là toute la question traitée; et je me bornerai comme arguments, irréfutables à donner les citations qui me sont nécessaires. Ce ne sera donc qu'une compilation de textes; car je compte sur tous les points me retrancher derrière Claude Bernard. Le plus souvent il me suffira de remplacer le mot médecin par le mot romancier pour rendre ma pensée plus claire et lui apporter la rigueur d'une vérité scientifique. . . En somme toute l'opération consiste à prendre les faits dans la nature, puis à étudier le mécanisme des faits en agissant sur eux par les modifications des circonstances et des milieux.⁶⁶

Zola, in short, derived much of his naturalistic thesis from the teachings of Claude Bernard, whose concept of experimental medicine is considered by J-H Bornecque as the "détonateur de la lourde machine de Zola."⁶⁷

The principles of Hippolyte Taine, Claude Bernard, and Prosper Lucas were, however, only amendments to a philosophy of literature which Zola had already formulated. This philosophy, expressed in a letter to H. Valabrègue in August 1864, is illustrated by the use of a type of symbol, the "écran". To illustrate and better justify his particular point of view, Zola first defined the "écran classique" and the "écran romantique", thereby underlining the different representations of reality possible in a work of art:

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁷ Bornecque, p. 57.

L'écran classique est une belle feuille de talc, très pure et d'un grain fin et solide, d'une blancheur laiteuse. Les images s'y dessinent nettement, au simple trait noir. . . L'écran classique, en un mot, est un verre grandissant qui développe les lignes et arrête les couleurs au passage. L'écran romantique est une glace sans tain, claire, bien qu'un peu troublé en certains endroits et colorée des nuances de l'arc-en-ciel. Le mensonge de la nature y est plus heurté et plus séduisant. L'écran romantique est, en somme, un prisme à la refraction très puissante, qui brise tout rayon lumineux et le décompose en un spectre solaire éblouissant. L'écran réaliste est un simple verre à vitre, très mince, très clair, et qui a la prétention d'être si parfaitement transparent que les images le traversent et se reproduisent ensuite dans leur réalité. L'écran réaliste nie sa propre existence. Vraiment, c'est là un trop grand orgueil. Il est certes difficile de caractériser un écran qui a pour qualité principale celle de n'être presque pas; je crois cependant le bien juger en disant qu'une fine poussière grise trouble sa limpidité. Tout objet en passant par ce milieu, y perd de son éclat ou plutôt s'y noircit légèrement. . . Toutes mes sympathies, s'il faut le dire, sont pour l'écran réaliste; il contente ma raison et je sens en lui des beautés immenses de solidité et de vérité; seulement, je le répète, je ne peux l'accepter tel qu'il veut se présenter à moi; je ne puis admettre qu'il donne des images vraies; et j'affirme qu'il doit avoir en lui des propriétés particulières qui déforment les images, et qui par conséquent, font de ces images des oeuvres d'art.⁶⁸

The particular properties which deform the images passing through the realistic screen and which made of these images works of art were (Zola defined a work of art as a "coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament) supplied to Zola by the philosophy of Schopenhauer who in Le Monde comme volonté et comme représentation viewed the human experience as follows:

Quant à la vie des individus, chaque biographie est une histoire de la souffrance, car dans la règle, chaque existence est une série continue de malheurs, grands et petits, que chacun, il est vrai, cache le mieux possible, parce qu'il sait que les autres éprouvent rarement de l'

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 53.

intérêt ou de la pitié, et presque toujours de la satisfaction, au récit des souffrances dont ils sont exemptés en ce moment. . . Si l'on mettait sous les yeux de chacun les souffrances, les tortures auxquelles sa vie est constamment exposée, il serait saisi de terreur.⁶⁹

The methodological negation of Schopenhauer was interpreted by Zola as an all-encompassing pessimism for the present. In this connection Beuchat remarks:

Peindre la misère des foules, leur décomposition morale, fruit de leur pauvreté; découvrir les plaies sociales dans tout leur horreur et leur crudité, c'était de faire oeuvre pessimiste.⁷⁰

Such a presentation of reality involves a judgement of reality. "Zola oserait porter un regard scrutateur sur les faits sociaux pour les juger avec une rigueur scientifique."⁷¹ This judgement of reality, an altogether intellectual matter, was directed at achieving the truth. With this goal ever before him, Zola portrayed in his novels not only the striking and the beautiful but also the not so striking and the not so beautiful--"Il prouvait que tous les sujets révèlent l'art pourvu qu'on a apporté à sa besogne un esprit respectueux de la vérité."⁷²

Zola, under the influence of Schopenhauer's thesis, preferred to illustrate in his novels visual reality as seen through the eyes of a pessimist. Beuchat remarks: "Cette man-

⁶⁹Reported in Bornecque, p. 69.

⁷⁰Beuchat, p. 16.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 14.

⁷²Ibid., p. 16.

liere pessimiste de considérer les choses et les êtres, d'être frappé par le côté sombre et noir de l'existence sera l'apanage de Zola pendant plus de quarante ans."⁷³ Zola's pessimistic approach to reality was as such an attempt to correct reality--"La mission du romancier n'est-elle pas d'analyser la vie entière, de préférence ses misères et ses horreurs, afin de travailler à l'amélioration de la société?"⁷⁴ Zola himself admonished his readers to be aware of his didactic purpose in writing fiction: "Je suis artiste et je vous donne ma chair et et mon sang et mon coeur et ma pensée. Je me mets nu devant vous, je me livre bon ou mauvais. Si vous voulez être instruits, regardez-moi."⁷⁵ Zola thus shows himself to be both pessimistic and optimistic: "Il est peintre pessimiste de la société présente doublé d'un annonciateur très optimiste de la société future."⁷⁶

The society that Zola portrayed in his novels was characterized by qualities that made it altogether a unique moment in history; a moment which had never existed before and which would never be repeated in exactly the same manner again. It was a generation innondated with science and the scientific method, an ephemeral generation characterized by the realization that the mundane realities of daily existence had no permanence, except perhaps in art. Zola, fully aware of the ephemeral nature

⁷³Beuchat, p.11.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁵Reported by Vaucaire, p. 821.

⁷⁶Beuchat, p. 12.

of reality, sought to make permanent in literary creations the fluid reality he observed around him. To do so required that reality be eternalized, that is, suspended and analyzed in a work of art. This ideal of suspension-analysis of the momentary has been considered by Hauser as the primary characteristic of the naturalistic novels of Emile Zola. Zola himself underlined the necessity of suspending fluid reality and analyzing it in its most momentary state in a letter to Lacroix in 1869, wherein Zola justified his twenty volume series of novels:

Les Rougon-Macquart (histoire d'une famille sous le Second Empire) sera un roman de moeurs et d'analyse humaine en dix épisodes. Chaque épisode formera la matière d'un volume. Ces épisodes, pris à part, formeront des histoires distinctes, complètes, ayant chacune leur dénouement propre; mais ils seront, en outre reliés les uns aux autres par un lien puissant qui en fera un seul et vaste ensemble. Le roman sera basé sur deux idées: 1) Etudier dans une famille les questions de sang et de milieu. Suivre pas à pas le travail secret qui donne aux enfants d'un même père des passions et des caractères différents à la suite des croisements et des façons particulières de vivre. Fouiller en un mot, au vif même, du drame humain, dans ces profondeurs de la vie où s'élaborent les grandes vertus et les grandes crimes et y fouiller d'une façon méthodique, conduit par les nouvelles découvertes physiologiques. 2) Etudier tout le Second Empire depuis le coup d'état jusqu'à nos jours; incarner dans les types de la société contemporaine les scélérats et les héros. Peindre ainsi tout un âge social dans les mille détails des moeurs et des événements. Le roman basé sur ces deux études, l'étude physiologique et l'étude social, étudierait donc l'homme de nos jours en entier. D'un côté je montrerais les ressorts cachés, les fils qui font mouvoir le pantin humain; et de l'autre je raconterais les faits et les gestes de ce pantin. Le coeur et le cerveau mis à nu, je démontrerais aisément comment et pourquoi le coeur et le cerveau ont agi de certaines façons déterminées et n'ont pas agi autrement.⁷⁷

Such a goal--the methodological analysis of each member of a

⁷⁷Reported in Bornecque, p.83.

specific family, living under a particular form of government in a specific country at each of the important moments of their lives as well as an analysis of all societal types "dans les mille détails des mœurs et des événements" certainly underlines the supremacy of the momentary in Zola's prose productions.

This concentration on the analysis of the momentary is seen not only in relationship to the characters of Zola's history of a family under the Second Empire but also in relationship to the milieu in which the family will live. This can be seen in Zola's earliest novel, Une page d'amour, wherein the author describes the city of Paris at five distinct and different moments of the day. Zola justified these five descriptions which conclude the five main parts of the novel as follows:

On ne voit là qu'un caprice d'artiste d'une répétition fatigante, qu'une difficulté vaincue pour montrer la dextérité de la main. J'ai pu me tromper et je me suis trompé certainement puisque personne n'a compris; mais la vérité est que j'ai eu toutes sortes de belles intentions, lorsque je me suis entêté à ces cinq tableaux de même décor, vu à des heures et des saisons différentes. Voici l'histoire. Dans la misère de ma jeunesse, j'habitais des greniers du faubourg, d'où l'on découvrait Paris entier. Ce grand Paris immobile et indifférent qui était toujours dans le cadre de ma fenêtre, me semblait comme le témoin muet, comme le confident tragique de mes joies et de mes tristesses. J'ai eu faim et j'ai pleuré devant lui, et devant lui, j'ai aimé, j'ai eu mes plus grands bonheurs. Eh bien, de ma vingtième année, j'ai rêvé d'écrire un roman, dont Paris avec l'océan des toitures, serait un personnage, quelque chose comme le chœur antique. Il me fallait un drame intime, trois ou quatre créatures dans une petite chambre, puis l'immense ville à l'horizon, toujours présente, regardant avec ses yeux de pierre, le tourment effroyable de ces créatures. C'est cette vieille idée que j'ai tenté de réaliser dans Une Page d'amour. Voilà tout.⁷⁸

This descriptive technique is so prevalent in the history of

⁷⁸ Zola, Le Roman Experimental, p. 189.

the Rougon-Macquart family that it need not be further illustrated or emphasized.

In an effort to convey in a work of art, a novel, a representation of each of the unique moments that compose fluid reality Zola scientifically gathered and recorded evidence to be utilized during the act of composition:

Il se documenta sur place, interroquant les gens pour saisir leurs réactions spontanées, leurs tics, et leur langage, et il notait. D'autrefois il lisait des livres scientifiques ou spéciaux. Il demandait des renseignements à vive voix ou par lettres à des savants, médecins. . . Il voyageait, il n'avait pas de repos qu'il n'eût obtenu les moindres détails nécessaires; ainsi documentée, il pouvait se mettre au travail, sans craindre de fausser la réalité et par conséquent de ne pas être naturaliste.⁷⁹

Concerning documentation Zola made the following remarks in

Le Roman Experimental:

Ce serait une curieuse étude que de dire comment travaillent nos grands romanciers contemporains. Ils établissent presque toujours tous leurs oeuvres sur des notes, prises longuement. Quand ils ont étudié avec un soin scrupuleux le terrain où ils doivent marcher, quand ils se sont renseigné à toutes les sources et qu'ils tiennent à la main les documents multiples dont ils ont besoin, alors, seulement ils se décident à écrire. Le plan de leur oeuvre est apporté par ces documents eux-mêmes, car il arrive que les faits se classent logiquement, celui-ci avant celui-la; une symétrie s'établit, l'histoire se compose de toutes les notes prises, l'une amenant l'autre, par l'enchaînement même de la vie des personnages, et le dénouement n'est plus qu'une conséquence naturelle et forcée. On voit, dans ce travail, combien l'imagination a peu de part. Nous sommes loin, par exemple, de Georges Sand, qui, dit-on, se mettait devant un cahier de papier blanc, et qui, partie d'une idée première, allait toujours sans s'arrêter, composant au fur et à mesure, se reposant en toute certitude sur son imagination, qui lui apportait autant de pages qu'il lui en fallait pour faire un volume.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Bataillon, p. 51.

⁸⁰ Zola, Le Roman Experimental, p. 166.

Zola further clarified his concept of documentation by indicating the method that would be utilized by a naturalistic novelist to write a novel about the theatre:

Un de nos romanciers naturalistes veut encore écrire un roman sur le monde des théâtres. Il part de cette idée générale, sans avoir encore un fait ni un personnage. Son premier soin sera de rassembler dans ses notes tout ce qu'il peut savoir sur ce monde qu'il veut peindre. Il a connu tel acteur, il a assisté à telle scène. Voilà déjà des documents, les meilleurs, ceux qui ont mûri en lui. Puis il se mettra en campagne, il fera causer les hommes les mieux renseignés sur la matière, il collectionnera les mots, les histoires, les portraits. Ce n'est pas tout: il ira ensuite aux documents écrits, lisant tout ce qui peut lui être utile. Enfin, il visitera les lieux, vivra quelques jours dans un théâtre pour en connaître les moindres recoins, passera des soirées dans une loge d'actrice, s'impregnera le plus possible de l'air ambiant. Et une fois les documents complets, son roman, comme je l'ai dit, s'établira de lui-même. 81

Zola's novels thereby became journals of scientifically recorded material based on the evidence of detailed sensory observations. As such Zola shows himself to be a disciple of the philosophy of Auguste Comte, wherein everything was dismissed in art which did not originate from a sensual experience. One need only think of such memorable scenes as the "symphonie des fromages" in Le Ventre de Paris or the "symphonie des fleurs" in La Faute de l'abbé Mouret to realize the influence of Comte's philosophy in the novels of Emile Zola.

Literary naturalism is then the product of a generation that grew up under the Second Empire and an art which triumphed when the Empire gave way to the Third Republic. It is a literature founded in modern science and technology, a literature of

⁸¹Ibid., p. 167

suspension, observation, description and analysis; a literature which fully shows the distinctive mark of the naturalistic thesis of Emile Zola. It is at the same time representative of the principal stylistic principles of the period during which it was created. In an attempt to verify this hypothesis an examination in detail of a literary artifact of the period is required, using as a means of analysis the stylistic principles of the arts of design which flourished during that period and which may have affected the stylistic construction of the literary artifact.

CHAPTER IV

LE VENTRE DE PARIS: A NATURALISTIC NOVEL

Le Ventre de Paris, published in 1873, two years after La Fortune des Rougon and La Curée, is an early yet complete expression of the mature naturalistic thesis of Emile Zola. Fundamental to this thesis, as has been illustrated earlier, is the Traité de l'hérédité naturelle of Prosper Lucas. This treatise, it will be recalled, provided Zola with "une carte d'identité héréditaire d'une famille", the Rougon-Macquart, living under the Second Empire; a family which, it would appear, is united only in the sense that they all share a common ancestry. Proof of the disintegration of Zola's novelistic family is seen in the fact that in each of the novels, with the exception of the first in the series, La Fortune des Rougon, which serves as a type of prologue wherein the main actors are introduced before the main action begins, and the last, Le Docteur Pascal, which serves as an epilogue to the series, Zola treats as main characters only one or two members of the Rougon-Macquart family. In Le Ventre de Paris, wherein heredity appears to be the only link tying the novel to the others in the series, Zola imagines Claude Lantier as a youth between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. He would later appear as the hero of L'Oeuvre and as a seven year old boy in L'Assommoir. In Le Ventre de Paris Claude

Lantier is an artist, the son of Gervaise Macquart and Auguste Lantier, who living in the area near the central markets of Paris in order to paint "des vastes natures mortes", encounters Florent, a republican wrongfully deported after the coup d'état of 1851. Florent has clandestinely returned to Paris where, during his exile, his half-brother Quenu (the husband of Lisa Macquart, who is the aunt of Claude Lantier and daughter of the hero of La Fortune des Rougon) has been growing steadily richer and at the same time fatter as the Empire prospers. Florent, unable to adjust his temperament to the atmosphere of satiety created by the Second Empire, begins a somewhat amateurish conspiracy to overthrow the government, is denounced by inhabitants of the quartier des Halles, including his sister-in-law, Lisa Quenu, and is deported once again. Le Ventre de Paris is the story of Florent, yet he is a member of the Rougon-Macquart family only by marriage, that is, he is Lisa Quenu's brother-in-law. Nevertheless, Florent is treated by the author as though he were a direct descendant of the Rougon-Macquart family. He is treated as such in that his actions throughout the novel, when developed by Zola, a novelist who is also a scientist, are reduced to a limited number of fixed laws, just as the phenomena of the physical sciences are reduced to fixed laws.

This deterministic concept, extracted by Zola from the writings of Taine, is seen illustrated very early in Le Ventre de Paris. Florent, having been extracted by Madame Francois

from the gutter wherein he lay is described as "un homme vautré tout de son long. . . Il paraissait d'une longueur extraordinaire, maigre comme une branche sèche."⁸² This early appearance of the word "maigre" is reinforced by the description of Florent lying on his stomach in Madame Francois cart of carrots and turnips:

La faim s'était réveillée, intolérable atroce. Ses membres dormaient; il ne sentait en lui que son estomac, tordu, tenaillé, comme un fer rouge. L'odeur fraîche des légumes dans lesquels il était enfoncé, cette senteur pénétrante des carottes, le troublaient jusqu'à l'évanouissement.

To complete the initial presentation of Florent, it is remarked that he notices the lights of Paris on the horizon, lights "qui l'appelaient, qui l'attendaient." (11) "Puis Florent, les yeux sur l'immense lueur de Paris, songeait à cette histoire qu'il cachait." (11) Florent, thin and starving, Florent the "maigre" is thus returning to a Paris of hedonistic satiety, Paris of the Second Empire, and his political ambitions are again reawakened: "Maintenant il lui fallait monter, atteindre Paris tout en haut." (11)

The complete futility of Florent's return to Paris to attempt again what he had failed to do before he was exiled is stated already in the opening pages of the novel when it is remarked: "Jamais il n'arriverait à ce sommet, couronne de ces lumières." (11) Yet Florent will pursue such a futile dream throughout the novel, until he is again deported for attempting to overthrow the Empire. His hunger had caused him to recreate

⁸²Emile Zola, Oeuvres Complètes Vol. IV Le Ventre de Paris Texte de l'édition Eugène Fasquelle (Paris: Bernouard, 1927), p. 7. Hereafter all page references to Le Ventre de Paris will be based on this edition and indicated in parentheses after the quotation.

in his mind the agony of the exile and perhaps more strongly convince him to attempt what he had failed to do seven years earlier:

Non la faim ne l'avait plus quitté. Il fouillait ses souvenirs, ne se rappelait pas une heure de plentitude. Il était devenu sec, l'estomac retrécie, la peau collée aux os. Et il retrouvait Paris, gras, superbe, débordant de nourriture au fond des ténèbres; il y rentrait sur un lit de légumes, il y roulait, dans un inconnu de mangeailles. (17)

An antithesis then is immediately established between the ill fated attempt of the "maigre" and the success of the "gras". This antithesis, fundamental to the entire novel, is localized by Florent as not all of Paris but only one section, Les Halles:

Il revoyait la ville gourmande qu'il avait laissée par cette lointaine nuit de janvier, et il lui semblait que cela avait grandi, s'était épanoui dans cette enormité des Halles, dont il commençait à entendre le souffle colossal, épais encore d'indigestion de la veille. (17)

Everything about Les Halles seemed to Florent to have assumed, in complete antithesis to himself, an air of fatness and satiety. Seeing his sister-in-law, Lisa Quenu, on the threshold of her "charcuterie" sunning herself in the morning air it is remarked:

Elle mettait un bonheur de plus, une plentitude solide au milieu de toutes ces galetés grasses. C'était une belle femme; elle tenait la largeur de la porte, point trop grasse pourtant, forte de la gorge, dans la maturité de la trentaine. Sa chair, paisible, avait cette blancheur transparente, cette peau fine et rosée des personnes qui vivent d'ordinaire dans les graisses et les viandes crues. (17)

Even Lisa's daughter and her cat have assumed a certain fatness:

C'était une superbe enfant de 5 ans, ayant une grosse figure ronde, d'une grande ressemblance avec la belle charcutière. Elle tenait entre ses bras une énorme chatte jaune. . . . (17)

As the first chapter closes the battle scene is fully set--the war between the rich and the poor, the fat and the thin, between the supporters of the Empire and the supporters of the republic. The entire Quenu family "suait la santé; ils étaient superbs, carres, luisants; ils le (Florent) regardaient avec l'étonnement de gens très gras pris d'une vague inquiétude en face d'un maigre. Et le chat lui-même, dont la peau petait de graisse, arrondissait ses yeux jaunes, l'examinait d'un air défiant." (66) It is a battle between the fat and the thin, a battle which permeates every aspect of the novel--from the description of the "quartier des Halles" and its inhabitants to the air and light that flood the quartier at mid-day. It is a battle which forms the underlying antithetical structure of the novel and which, as was foretold in the opening pages, will in the end only strengthen the position of the already fat bourgeoisie. Victory is conceded by Claude Lantier "un maigre", as the novel closes:

Il injuriait les Gras, il disait que les Gras avaient vaincu. Autour de lui il ne voyait plus que des gras, s'arrondissant, crevant de santé, saluant un nouveau jour de belle indigestion. (500)

It is a battle won by the fat, a group represented most strikingly by Lisa Quenu whose principal preoccupation is to live a comfortable and honest life. Lisa is presented in the novel as the oldest daughter of the Macquart family of Plassans whose primary beliefs were that

tout le monde doit travailler pour manger, que chacun est chargé de son propre bonheur, qu'on fait le mal en

encourageant la paresse; enfin, que, s'il y a des malheureux, c'est tant pis pour les fainéants. (81)

As such she represents a typical member of the Macquart family:

Elle n'était qu'une Macquart rangée, raisonnable, logique, avec ses besoins de bien-être, ayant compris que la meilleur méthode de s'endormir le soir dans une tiédeur heureuse est encore de se faire soi-même un lit de beatitude. (81)

Such is her plan of action throughout the entire novel:

Elle donnait à cette couche moelleuse toutes ses heures, toutes ses pensées. Dès l'âge de six ans elle consentait à rester bien sage sur sa petite chaise, la journée entière, à la condition qu'on la récompenserait d'un gâteau le soir. (81)

It is in the defense of her explicitly stated goals that she ultimately asks Florent to take his meals elsewhere, for fear of endangering her position. It is likewise in fear of having her husband involved directly in the conspiracy of Florent and his friends that she runs to the police station. It is a desire that permeates every action of Lisa throughout the novel, a pursuit that is as tireless and all-encompassing as is the ill-fated pursuit of an ideal for which Florent eventually sacrificed himself. In both cases they are pursuits dictated by the forces of heredity, a heredity that determined their every move, reaction and thought.

With this given set of characters Zola has created a novel by placing them in a specific historical situation, the Second Empire, characterized by Hemmings as an "eighteen year long orgy executed by ravening beasts."⁸³ Hemmings further remarks:

The economic historian may talk of the great material

⁸³Hemmings, Zola, p. 77.

prosperity of the era, of booming trade and rising incomes and the steady accumulation of capital wealth. Zola saw it as a vast champing of tireless jaws, a stuffing of infinitely capacious bellies, a disgusting and mannerless blow-out, a generation of satisfied tradespeople waxing fatter and fatter on an inexhaustible supply of carbohydrates, as cooped and mindless battery hens.⁸⁴

Zola, in order to complete the illustration of Taine's philosophy need only to place these people living under the Second Empire in a specific geographical situation. Such a framework is provided by Les Halles. Only once in the novel does the action move outside the area of the central markets--when Claude Lantier and Florent accompany Madame Francois to her home outside the city of Paris. Even then the action takes place primarily in her market garden, referred to by Hemmings as a "type of alimentary canal through which food is injected into the belly of Paris--the market itself."⁸⁵

Having then defined the "race" and the "moment", Zola situates his characters living under the Second Empire in a specific milieu. The importance of the milieu is underlined by Zola as follows:

Le dosage des tares et des caractéristiques médico-sociales admis, les personnages sont nécessairement définis. Mais si l'élément psychologique impose ses lois, certaines modifications peuvent se présenter sous l'influence du milieu.⁸⁶

The milieu of Le Ventre de Paris is one innondated with the fundamental antithetical situation that separates the char-

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

⁸⁶ Reported in Bornecque, p. 56.

into two distinct groups, yet in presenting the milieu Zola has shown in an attempt to make the futility of Florent's actions more clear, only the aspects of the milieu that could be considered as "gras". For it is a world inhabited by the fat, a world which in fact resembles its inhabitants in every respect. The world of the thin is not seen. A certain fatness and satiety is prevalent even in the air that circulates in the "quartier des Halles":

Elle (Lisa) avait soigneusement écarté toute les causes possibles de trouble, laissant couler les journées au milieu de cet air gras, de cette prospérité alourdie. (93)

The importance that Zola gave to environment, "le milieu qui complète et détermine l'homme", as Hemmings has shown, hampered Zola's treatment of Florent, the first intellectual to appear in Les Rougon-Macquart, a republican full of idealism who refused to succumb to the forces of need and accept the position as market inspector. Yet he gives in to Lisa's insistence that he should become market inspector. He changes his mind, as Hemmings states, "not by the soundness of Lisa's views but by her radiant good health and the smell of the black pudding cooking."⁸⁷

Florent était comme pénétré par cette odeur de la cuisine, qu'il le nourrissait de toute la nourriture dont l'air était chargé; il glissait à la lacheté heureuse de cette digestion continue du milieu gras où il vivait depuis quinze jours.... Il se sentait si alangui par cette soirée calme, par les parfums du boudin et du saindoux, par cette grosse Pauline endormie sur ses genoux, qu'il se surprit à vouloir passer d'autres soirées semblables, des soirées sans fin, qui l'en-

⁸⁷Hemmings, Zola, p.

graisseraient. . . Non c'est trop bête, à la fin. . .
J'accepte. Dites à Gavard que j'accepte. (162-63)

His active participation in the world of the fat, however,
begins to become oppressive for him:

Il souffrait de ce milieu grossier dont les gestes
semblaient avoir pris de l'odeur. (222)

His decision to again attempt to overthrow the Empire is
hastened by the milieu in which he finds himself surrounded:

Les Halles géantes, les nourritures débordantes et
fortes, avaient hâté la crise. Elles lui semblaient
la bête satisfaite et digérant. Elles mettaient au-
tour de lui des gorges énormes, des reins monstrueux,
des faces rondes, comme de continuels arguments contre
sa maigreur de martyr; alors il se sentit les poings
serrés prêt à la lutte, plus irrités par la pensée de
son exil; qu'il ne l'était en rentrant en France. La
haine le reprit toute entière. (226)

The milieu of Le Ventre de Paris in the end triumphs. It
triumphs for it expells from its presence the intruder, "le
maigre", who threatened its very existence. Claude Lantier,
walking through the "quartier des Halles" the day after Florent
had again been deported, notices a certain air of happiness in
the markets:

Il sentait un reveil de gaieté dans les grandes Halles
sonores. C'était comme une joie de guérison, un tap-
age plus haut de gens soulagés, enfin, d'un poids qui
leur genait l'estomac. (499)

Not only are characters presented as strongly affected by
their environment, but they at times are completely insepar-
able from the milieu surrounding them. Mlle. Saget, having
triumphantly extracted the precious guarded information about
Florent's past from Lisa's daughter, runs to tell La Sarriette
and Madame Lecoœur. In the following scene, she takes on com-

pletely the characteristics of the milieu, that is, a cheese booth in the central markets:

Elle restait debout, se sauvant, dans le bouquet final des fromages. Tous à cette heure donnaient à la fois. C'était une cacophonie de suffles inflects, depuis les lourdeurs molles des pâtes cuites, du gruyère et du hollande, jusqu'aux pointes alcalives de l'olivet. . . Cela s'épandait, se soutenait, au milieu du vibration général n'ayant plus de parfums distincts, d'un vertige continu de nausée et une force terrible d'asphyxie. Cependant il semblait que c'étaient les paroles de Mme. Lecoeur et de Mlle. Saget qui puaient si fort. (396)

Zola's avowed intentions in writing Les Rougon-Macquart, it will be recalled, were two fold: 1) to study in one family the questions of heredity and milieu 2) to study in its entirety the Second Empire. Zola would thus present man as an individual and as a member of a particular group in a society. His observations produced many penetrating studies of man as an individual and man as a societal type, but none as convincing as his study of Lisa Quenu. Lisa, apart from symbolizing the epitome, with respect to physical structure, of the bourgeoisie, represents a cherished ideal of her class--honesty. She repeatedly attempts to give Florent his share of the inheritance from Uncle Gradelle. Her honesty was even recognized by Mlle Saget and her information gathering associates, Mlle Lecoeur and La Sariette who avow: "L'honnêteté de Lisa était un des actes de foi du quartier." (133) Zola, in his plan for the novel remarked, however:

Honnêteté, il faut s'entendre. Je veux lui donner l'honnêteté de sa classe et montrer quels dessous formidables de lacheté, de cruauté, il y a sous la chair calme d'une bourgeoise.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Reported by Hemmings, Zola, p. 98.

Yet beneath the veneer of honesty in Lisa is a more powerful force--the desire to maintain at all costs the air of satiety that the Second Empire has produced. Nothing will be allowed to disturb the balance and threaten the fattened bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that Lisa, discovering the flags piled in Florent's room in preparation for the insurrection, runs to the police. Her actions and the actions of the bourgeoisie of which becomes the symbol crush Florent's insurrection; a failure caused by the bourgeoisie and epigrammatically summed up by Claude Lantier at the close of the novel: "Quels gredins que les honnêtes gens." (502)

Zola has then succeeded in presenting both an individual and a societal type in his presentation of Lisa--one need only think of Florent--le maigre, La Normande, la belle poissonnière, la petite vieille, and other such individuals who represent societal types to realize the great number of "individual-type" treatments in the novel. These individuals who are also types are presented throughout the novel in everyday situations--they are working, gossiping, drinking, eating, all the while growing fatter and fatter. They represent collectively the crass civilization of the Second Empire. Zola remarked in this connection: "Et quel sujet vraiment moderne."⁸⁹

Le Ventre de Paris is then a complete expression of the naturalistic thesis of Emile Zola for it is a scientific analysis of a specific and carefully selected group of people who live at a certain time in history in a certain milieu; it

⁸⁹Reported in Beuchat, p. 58

is a scientific journal of carefully documented sensory observations; it is a hymn to the ordinary and the common; it is a judgement of a particular society; it is a portrait of an individual in that society and it is a portrait of that society in its entirety. It is in short a wholly naturalistic novel. Yet it is more, for it represents the principal stylistic principles of the society out of which it was created and the historical moment described therein.

CHAPTER V

LE VENTRE DE PARIS: AN IMPRESSIONISTIC NOVEL

The fundamental principle of the stylistics of impressionism is a general fragmentation of form. This conception of the form of artistic matter can be traced to the early years of the eighteenth century and the reign of Louis XV, that is, the age of the Rococo. Unlike the creative arts of the seventeenth century, the Rococo was primarily, as Sypher has demonstrated, "first of all a style of ornamentation, not basically illustrative but decorative."⁹⁰ The Rococo, without denying plasticity and design, embellished form in such a manner that within a certain geometrical rigidity, certain decorative liberties were allowed that violated the classical desire for symmetry; that is, within a defined geometrical plane asymmetry was allowed. This meant a new emphasis on the component parts of the organic whole rather than on the whole itself. It is an identical concept of form that was later adopted by the Romantics, who in rejecting the classical notion of universality with regard to content, nonetheless accepted, in many instances, classical form; that is, the subjective emotional revolt of the Romantics was in a large part expressed in classical forms. Sypher remarks in this connection: "The truth is that technically speaking there is no such

⁹⁰Wylie Sypher, Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 24

a thing as romantic art, there are only romantic artists."⁹¹

Realism, on the other hand, is a technical achievement of the nineteenth century for it represents a deliberate effort on the part of the artist to represent reality utilizing a particular and individual mode of expression. It was in fact the mode of expression that had value and not the reality represented. Flaubert once remarked:

What seems beautiful to me, what I should like to write is a book about nothing, a book dependant on nothing external, which would be held together by the strength of its style.⁹²

As such the Realism of Flaubert is essential to the development of impressionism. Both Flaubert and the impressionists, in emphasizing the common and the everyday, discovered a new form of artistic representation for the contents therein expressed. Such contents represent a natural evolution away from the perfect symmetry and wholeness of classical art in that the component parts represent the whole without the whole being present. That is, realism and impressionism in representing only the characteristic components of the whole represent the whole without the the geometric symmetry required by the classical artists to achieve the same purpose.

The form of artistic representation utilized by the impressionists was dictated by their almost exaggerated emphasis on light and color. Moser remarks in this connection:

Jamais peinture n'a connu une pareille féerie de la couleur. L'impressionisme pictural est un hymne à la couleur qui finira par exclure du tableau toute autre

⁹¹Ibid., p. 70.

⁹² Reported by Sypher, p. 74.

préoccupation que celle de la lumière du soleil, décompose en mille points colorés et radieux."⁹³

By using light, the impressionists destroyed not only perspective in the classical sense but also line; yet in this reduction through light they gave the illusion of outlining forms by juxtaposing color spots on the surface of a canvas.

Moser states:

Ils ne tracent plus la forme, mais ils font semblant de la tracer en la suggérant par des taches ou des pointes colorées qui ne ressemblent nullement à cette forme mais qui, à distance, l'évoquent. . Ils dissolvent le monde en vibrations colorées.⁹⁴

As such impressionism represents a type of double evolution in the creative arts in that as light and color are achieved, form is destroyed. The more form is destroyed, the more light and color are achieved. Moser succinctly summarizes impressionism as follows:

A la fin, il n'y a dans la peinture impressionniste plus de ligne, plus de volume, presque plus de forme. Il n'y a plus que l'image du monde privé de poids et de consistance, vibrant dans une lumière intense et éblouissante.⁹⁵

The literature of impressionism is founded on identical principles--a fragmentation of form and an emphasis on the attainment of light and color. The general fragmentation of form of painterly impressionism is seen in the literature of impressionism as a general syntactical simplification. Just as the symmetrical and outlined forms in art have been abandoned, so in

⁹³Ruth Moser, L'Impressionnisme français (Geneve: Droz, 1952), p. 53.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 74.

literature have been the symmetrical and reasoned sentence:

En littérature la cohérence de la phrase est brisée, le règne de l'ordre logique est aboli. La littérature de l'impressionnisme ne connaît plus guère la phrase achevée, correcte, bien assise, rythmée et équilibrée. Elle lui substitue une phrase morcelée, formée d'impressions successives qui viennent s'inscrire en elle sans lien grammatical et logique.⁹⁶

Reutersvard underlines this point when he states:

Just as there is not a previously arranged mixture of colors in art, so there is no logical construction of the sentence in literature.⁹⁷

In order to understand better the precise nature of the impressionistic sentence it is necessary to study in detail each of the major component parts of such a construction, beginning with the most fundamental element of the impressionistic sentence, the noun. The impressionistic sentence is characterized by an abundance of substantives placed in positions of importance. This position is dictated in a large part by the essentially descriptive nature of impressionism. In the pursuit of the momentary and the unique, the impressionist suspends the movement of fluid reality, as does the naturalist, in an attempt to analyze in detail and describe the particular qualities of a unique moment in the perpetuum of time. The result is a sentence primarily nominal in character, a sentence which is characterized by an abundance of commas, semi-colons, and conjunctions in an effort to describe every detail. In the following paragraph

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 243.

⁹⁷ Reutersvard, p. 275.

containing 325 words and composed of 10 nominal sentences joined by "puis", "d'abord", "il y avait", "ensuite", "il y avait encore", and "enfin", there are 59 commas, 7 semi-colons, 1 colon and 85 nouns. The grammatical pattern utilized by Zola in the description of the Quenu charcuterie is not without order. Rather, there is a logical arrangement of "d'abord", "il y avait", "ensuite", "il y avait encore", and "enfin". This sequence is a consistent pattern utilized by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris, a pattern which presents a comprehensive description of a particular reality, in this instance, the Quenu charcuterie.

Puis dans ce cadre aimable, l'étalage montait. Il était pose sur un lit de fines rognures de papier bleu; par endroits, des feuilles de fougere, délicatement rangees, changeaient certaines assiettes en bouquets entoures de verdure. C'était un monde de bonnes choses; de choses fondantes, de choses grasses. D'abord, tout en bas, contre la glace, il y avait une rangée de pots de moutarde. Les jambonneaux désossés venaient au-dessus, avec leur bonne figure ronde, jaune de chapelure, leur manche terminé par un pampon vert. Ensuite arrivaient les grands plats: les langues fourrées de Strasbourg, rouges et vernies, saignantes à côté de la paleur des saucisses et des pieds de cochon; les boudins, noirs, roules comme des couleuvres bonnes filles; les andouilles, empliées deux à deux, crevant de santé; les saucissons, pareils à des échines de chantre, dans leurs chapes d'argent; les patés, tout chauds, portant les petits drapeaux de leurs étiquettes; les gros jambons, les grosses pièces de veau et de porc, glacées, et dont la gelée avait des limpidités au fond desquelles dormaient des viandes et des hachis, dans des lacs de graisse figée. Entre les assiettes, entre le plat, sur un lit de rognures bleues, se trouvaient jetés des bocaux d'aschards, de coulis, de truffes conservées, des terrines de foies gras, des boîtes moirées de thon, et de sardines. Une caisse de fromages laitoux, et une autre, pleine d'escargots bourrés de beurre persillé, étaient posées aux deux coins, négligemment. Enfin, tout en haut, tombant d'une barre à dents de loup, des colliers de saucisses, de saucissons, de cervelas, pendaient, symétriques, semblables à des cordons et à des glands de teintures riches; tandis que, derrière, des

lambeaux de crépine mettaient leur dentelle, leur fond de guipure blanche et charnue. Et là, sur le dernier gradin de cette chapelle de ventre, au milieu des bouts de la crépine entre deux bouquets de glaieuls pourpres, le reposoir se couronnait d'un aquarium carré, garni de rocaille, où deux poissons rouges nageaient, continuellement. (16-63)

Equally important to the impressionistic sentence is the descriptive adjective, particularly the adjective of color, which makes the representation of the object described more precise in that it is given the particular characteristics of a specific moment of color associated with an object in a particular milieu. In the following description of the cabbages piled in the street, the adjectives of color and nouns almost inhibit the sentence from flowing freely, that is, the description piles up and the sentence appears as a chain of substantives and adjectives of color. This piling up is considered by Moser as an important characteristic of the impressionistic sentence: "Les couleurs et les choses se pressent dans cette prose, gonflent la phrase, la tendent et souvent l'empêchent d'avancer."⁹⁸

Au carrefour de la rue des Halles, les choux faisaient des montagnes; les énormes choux blancs, serrés et durs comme des boulets de métal pale; les choux frisés, dont les grandes feuilles ressemblaient à des vasques de bronze; les choux rouges, que l'aube changeaient en des floraisons superbes, liés de vin, avec des meurtrissures de carmin et de pourpre sombre. (46)

This piling up of substantives and adjectives of color is seen more clearly in the following description of the "pavilion de

⁹⁸Moser, p. 121.

de la marée":

Pêle-mêle, au hasard du coup de filet, les algues profondes, où dort la vie mystérieuses des grandes eaux, avaient tout livré; les cabillauds, les aigrefins, les carrelets, les plies, les limandes, bêtes communes d'un gris sale, aux taches blanchâtres; les congres, ces grosses couleuvres d'un bleu de vase, aux minces yeux noirs, si gluantes qu'elles semblent ramper, vivantes encore; les raies élargies, à ventre pale bordé de rouge tendre, dont les dos superbes, allongeant les neouds saillants de l'échine, se marbrent, jusqu'aux baleines tendues des nageoires, de plaques de cinabre coupées par des zébrures de bronze florentin, d'une bigarrure assombrie de crapaud et de fleur malsaine; les chiens de mer, horribles, avec leurs têtes rondes, leurs courtes ailes de chauves-souris charnues, monstres qui doivent garder de leurs abois les trésors des grottes marines. Puis, venaient les beaux poissons, isolés un sur chaque plateau d'osier; les saumons, d'argent guilloché, dont chaque écaille semble un coup de burin dans le poli de métal; les mulets, d'écailles plus fortes, de ciselures plus grossières; les grands turbots, les grandes barbures, d'un grain serré et blanc comme du lait caillé; les thons, lissés et vernis, pareilles à des sacs de cuir noirâtre; les bars arrondis, ouvrant une bouche énorme, faisant songer à quelque âme trop grasse, rendue à pleine gorge, dans la stupefaction de l'agonie. Et de toutes parts, les soles, par paires, grises ou blondes, pullulaient; les équilles minces, raidies, ressemblaient à des rognures d'étain; les harengs, légèrement tordus, montraient tous, sur leurs robes lamées, la meurtrissure de leurs ouïes saignantes; les dorades grasses se teintaient d'une pointe de carmin, tandis que les maquereaux, dorés, le dos strié de brunissures verdâtres, faisaient luire la nacre changeante de leurs flancs, et que les grondins roses, à ventres blancs, les têtes rangées au centre des mannes, les queues rayonnantes, épanouissaient d'étranges floraisons, panachées de blanc de perle et de vermillon vif. Il y avait encore des rougets de roche, à la chair exquise, du rouge enlumine des cyprins, des caisses de merlans, aux reflets d'opale, des paniers d'éperlans, de petits paniers propres, jolis comme des paniers de fraises, qui laissaient échapper une odeur puissante de violette.

(165-67)

In addition to what may be considered a normal grammatical use of the adjective of color, that is after the noun it modifies, the impressionist word artist utilizes color adjectives in a manner

particular to his primary objective, that is, to paint light and color by fragmenting form. In the impressionistic sentence adjectives of color are occasionally given positions of such importance that they eclipse the noun they modify, that is, the color becomes more important than the object to which it belongs. This effect is achieved in three ways: 1) by changing the position of the adjective of color from its normal post-nominal position. 2) substantizing the adjective 3) replacing the adjective by an abstract substantive of quality.

By changing the position of the adjective of color from its normal post-nominal position, the impressionistic word artist thereby achieves a strong sense of color in that the eye perceives the color of the object before the object is perceived. Moser underlines this point as follows:

L'adjectif qui précède le substantif contre la règle traduit toujours une sensation plus forte que la pensée logique; l'oeil aperçoit la forme et la couleur avant de les attribuer à l'objet auquel elles appartiennent.⁹⁹

The following example illustrates this point:

Un bec de gaz, au sortir d'une nappe d'ombre, éclairait les clous d'un soulier, la manche bleue d'une blouse (instead of "la manche d'une blouse bleue"); le bout d'une casquette, entrevus dans cette floraison énorme des bouquets rouges des carottes (instead of "des bouquets de carottes rouges"), des bouquets blancs de navets (instead of "des bouquets de navets blancs"), des verdure débordantes des pois et des choux. (5-6)

An equally strong sense of color is produced by substantizing the adjective of color as in the following example:

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 104.

Et le vernis mordoré d'un panier d'oignons, le rouge saignant d'un tas de tomates, l'effacement jaunâtre d'un lot de concombres, le violet sombre d'une grappe d'aubergines, ça et là, s'allumaient; pendant que de gros radis noirs, rangés en nappes de deuil, laissaient encore quelque trous de ténèbres, au milieu des joies virbrantes du réveil. (47)

Or in the following descriptions of the fish in the "pavillon de la marée" in the sunlight and the vegetables covering the sidewalks in the "quartier des Halles":

Une barre de soleil, tombant du haut vitrage de la rue couverte, vint allumer ces couleurs précieuses, lavées et attendries par la vague, irissées et fondues dans les tons de chair des coquillages, l'opale des merlans, la nacre des maquereaux, l'or des rougets, la robe lamée des harengs, les grandes pièces d'argenterie des saumons. (167)

On ne voyait encore, dans la clarté brusque et tournante des lanternes, que l'épanouissement d'un paquet d'artichauts, les verts délicats des salades, le corail rose des carottes, l'ivoire mat des navets; et ces éclairs de couleur intenses filaient le long des tas, avec des lanternes. (25)

The impressionistic word artist can also produce a strong sensation of color by replacing the adjective of color by an abstract substantive of quality as in the following example:

C'était une mer. Elle s'étendait de la pointe Saint-Eustache à la rue des Halles, entre les deux groupes de pavillons. Et aux deux bouts, dans les deux carrefours le flot grandissait encore; les légumes submergeaient les pavés. . . ces tas moutonnants comme des flots pressés, ce fleuve de verdure qui semblait couler dans l'encaissement de la chaussée, pareil à la débacle des pluies d'automne, prenaient des ombres délicats et perlées, des violets attendris, des roses teintées de lait, des verts noyés dans des jaunes, toutes les paleurs qui font du ciel une soie changeante au lever du soleil. (45)

Utilizing the preceding descriptive techniques, that is, changing the position of the adjective of color, substantizing the color adjective, and replacing the color adjective by an

abstract substantive of color, the impressionist word artist places on the page, in much the same manner as the painterly impressionist places on the canvas, distinct and unblended dots of color, thereby producing a strong sense of color. These techniques are in fact viewed by Hatzfeld as the main descriptive technique utilized by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the adjectival transformations carried out in the preceding ways, the impressionist artist also alters the adjective of color by the addition of the suffix "atre". This suffix used repeatedly in Le Ventre de Paris evokes a color that could only have been produced on a specific object at a specific time in a specific geographical location. It evokes, in short, a totally impressionistic color. The following scene takes place in the dimly lit poultry storage area beneath Les Halles:

Le grillage de la resserie était tout poussiéreux, tendu de toiles d'araignées, à ce point qu'il semblait garni de stores gris; l'urine des lapins rongait les panneaux du bas; la fiente de la volaille tachait les planches d'éclaboussures blanchâtres. Mais Lisa ne voulait pas desobliger Marjolin en montrant davantage son dégoût. (325-26)

In the following scene Les Halles are described as "greenish grey" as they emerge from the shadows:

Et Florent regardait les grandes Halles sortir de l'ombre, où il les avait vues, allongeant à l'infini leurs palais à jour. Elles se solidifiaient, d'un gris verdâtre, plus géantes encore, avec leur mature prodigieuse, supportant les nappes sans fin de leurs toits. (44)

Not only is the "atre" suffix utilized to describe objects but also people, as in the following description given by Claude

¹⁰⁰Hatzfeld, p. 173

Lentier of Marjolin and Cadine:

Il (Marjolin) connaissait les moindres recoins des Halles, les aimait d'une tendresse de fils, vivait avec des agilités d'écureuil, au milieu de cette forêt de fonte. Ils (Marjolin and Cadine) faisaient un joli couple, lui, et cette geuse de Cadine que la mère Chant-messe avait ramassé un soir au coin de l'ancien marché des innocents. Lui était splendide, ce grand bête, doré comme un Reubens, avec un duvet roussâtre qui accrochait le jour. (43)

In addition to the abundance of substantives and adjectives, particularly those of color, the impressionistic sentence is characterized by the almost total absence of verbs from positions of importance. The verb is usually relegated to a clause or used as an auxiliary. It is the substantives and the adjectives that dominate the impressionistic sentence. Hatzfeld has called this type of sentence a "color spot without verbal harmonization"¹⁰¹

Ruth Moser also underlines this point as follows:

Dans la phrase impressionniste il n'y a aucun verbe principal. . . Il en résulte un mouvement brisé de la phrase, privée de son lien principal, du verbe. Sans verbe, il n'y a pas d'élan rythmé, il n'y a pas de continuité.¹⁰²

Moser further explains:

Cette méfiance à l'égard du verbe est une des marques du style impressionniste.¹⁰³

The relative unimportance of verbs in the impressionistic sentence is the result of the inherent nature of impressionism, a descriptive art and not a narrative art. Utilizing a scientific eye the impressionist suspends momentarily the motion of time

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁰² Moser, p. 126.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 244.

and thereafter analyzes in detail the moment of reality held in suspension. Moser remarks:

La phrase impressionniste se compose de substantifs juxtaposés, déterminés soit par des adjectifs verbaux ou des compléments de noms. Cela suffit, l'essentiel est dit, un verbe n'ajouterait rien de plus, n'aurait qu'une fonction logique et syntaxique à remplir; terminer la pensée, la pensée qui s'ébauche, achever la phrase.¹⁰⁴

Moser's remarks are further substantiated by Wartburg in comparing the general characteristics of the French and German languages, particularly the verb:

La catégorie des mots qui marque surtout les transformations, le devenir, l'activité, est le verbe. Or, le rôle du verbe est bien plus réduit en français qu'en allemand. D'abord, le verbe français a souvent quelque chose de plus abstrait, de moins nuancé, de moins précis que le verbe allemand. On s'en apercevra facilement quand on se trouve dans la nécessité de traduire un texte allemand. Il faut dire "aller à cheval", "aller en voiture", "aller à pied", pour "reiten", "fahren", "gehen"; autrement dit la différence entre ces trois manières de locomotion est exprimée par des substantifs. Pour "stehen" "sitzen", and "liegen" le français se sert du verbe incolore "être" avec un adjectif ou un adverbe (debout, assis, couché). Du reste il n'en a pas toujours été ainsi. L'ancien français disait "ester", "seoir", "gesir". Il serait facile de multiplier ces exemples pour opposer la richesse verbal de l'ancien français à la pauvreté du français moderne.¹⁰⁵

There was then a general evolution away from the essentially verbal style of old French towards a more nominal style, an evolution which can be observed clearly by comparing the essentially verbal structure of much Renaissance and Classical literature to the more nominal literature of the late eighteenth and nine-

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 126

¹⁰⁵ W. V. Wartburg, Evolution et structure de la langue française (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934), pp. 227-228.

teenth centuries in France. The most noticeable stages in this evolution towards nominalism can be seen in the prose productions of Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Balzac, and Flaubert. Wartburg substantiates this point as follows:

Cette tendance à exprimer les événements et les actions par des ~~des~~ substantifs plutôt que par des verbes s'est particulièrement accentuée au courant du dix-neuvième siècle.¹⁰⁶

This evolution from an essentially verbal style to an essentially nominal style reached a high point of development in the novels of Emile Zola, particularly Le Ventre de Paris. As such Zola was aided in achieving his naturalistic objectives. Wartburg remarks:

On a souvent étudié cette transformation de la phrase moderne (c'est-à-dire nominale) et l'on a constaté qu'elle devient particulièrement fréquente chez les naturalistes. Cela n'est pas nous étonner, car les naturalistes cherchent à donner une vision aussi nette que possible des objets. On peut puiser chez eux à pleines mains: "Sur les deux trottoirs c'était une hâte de pas, des bras ballants, une hâte sans fin. Il y eût une panique folle, un galop de bétail, une fuite éperdue dans la boue." ¹⁰⁷

Zola was, at the same time, aided in achieving his impressionistic objective as can be observed in the following examples from Le Ventre de Paris:

Sur le carreau de la rue Rambuteau il y avait des tas gigantesques de choux-fleurs, rangés en piles comme des boulets, avec une régularité surprenante. Les chairs blanches et tendres des choux s'épanouissaient, pareilles à d'énormes roses, au milieu des grosses feuilles vertes, et les tas ressemblaient à des bouquets de mariée, alignés dans des jardinières colossales. (31)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 228-229.

Entre les quatre haies, le long du potager, le soleil de mai avait comme une pamoison de tiédeur, un silence plein d'un bourdonnement d'insects, une somnolence d'enfantement heureux. A certain craquements, à certain soupirs légers, il semblait qu'on entendît naître et pousser les légumes. Les carrés d'épinards et d'oseille, les bandes de radis, de navets et de choux, étalaient leurs nappes régulières, leur terreau noir, verdi par les panaches des feuilles. Plus loin, les rigoles de salades, les oignons, les poireaux, les céleris, alignés, plantés au cordeau, semblaient des soldats de plomb à la parade. (343-44)

The verbs contained in the above descriptions do not in any instance carry the eye of the reader outside a very limited geographical area; in the first example, "le carreau de la rue Rambuteau," in the second example Madame Francois's market garden. They are static verbs. Any movement which occurs is contained within the suspended moment analyzed by the author. Just as the impressionistic canvas seems to be alive with movement, so too does the moment described by the literary impressionist. Yet it is a restricted movement in that it is limited to only one moment. As such the moment is represented as distinctly different from all other moments in the perpetuum of time, that is, an illusion of movement is portrayed when in reality no movement occurs. What appears to be movement is in most instances an illusion of movement created by the vibrating dots of color bathed in light. The verb "s'épanouir", for example, is utilized by Zola in describing the cabbages on the "carreau de la rue Rambuteau". The movement implied by the use of such a reflexive verb, however, does not take place. Yet to the observer there is an illusion of movement created by the effect of light and color, an illusion of movement produced by chromatic fusion

on the observer's retina. A similar effect is achieved in the following sentence taken from the above description of Madame Francois's garden: "A certain craquements, à certain soupîrs légers, il semblait qu'on entendît naître et pousser les légumes." The movement inherent in the verbs "naître" and "pousser" does not occur. It is an illusion of movement produced by the fragmentation of form through light. Similarly there is no movement produced or associated with the verb "étaier" in the following sentence: "Les carrés d'épinards, et d'oseille, les bandes de radis, de navets, de carottes, les grands plants de pommes de terre et de choux, étaient leurs nappes régulières, leur terreau noir, verdi par les panaches des feuilles." The verb "étaier" in the preceding sentence is static. It is, in short, a verb with a wholly nominal or descriptive function. The same is true of the verb "il y avait" in the following sentence: "Sur le carreau de la rue Rambuteau il y avait des tas gigantesques de choux-fleurs, rangés en piles comme des boulets, avec une régularité surprenante." The impersonal verb "il y a" in this instance is followed by the substantive "des tas" which grammatically serves as the direct object. Logically "des tas" appears as the subject. Alfred Ewert underlines this point when he states:

"Il y a des hommes" is felt to be logically on the same footing as "des hommes existent", that is, there are men.¹⁰⁸

"Il y a" thereby becomes a positing verb, that is, a verb in-

¹⁰⁸ Alfred Ewert, The French Language (New York: McMillan, 1938), p. 236.

dicating not the movement of a particular reality but only its existence.

The description given above of Madame Francois's market garden illustrates well a fundamental use of verbs in the impressionistic sentence, that is, impressionistic verbs serve not a narrative function but a descriptive function. As such the majority of the verbs in Le Ventre de Paris are in the imperfect tense, the principal tense of French Realism. It is in fact the dominant tense of French prose in the second half of the nineteenth century, a tense whose descriptive capabilities were fully realized by Gustave Flaubert and which thereafter became a literary common place in French prose. The imperfect tense is of particular value to the impressionist literary artist, who having suspended the motion of fluid reality utilized description as a means of representing comprehensively a particular moment. In other words, as narrative progression is subordinated to description the particular characteristics of a rigidly defined moment are fully represented in an effort to differentiate one moment from all other moments in the perpetuum of time. In the following description of Lisa sunning herself in front of her charcuterie no action occurs even though the scene is constructed with sixteen verbs. Fifteen of these verbs are in the imperfect tense. (In the clause "des personnes qui vivent d'ordinaire dans les graisses" the present tense of the verb "vivre" followed by "d'ordinaire" has the same value as an imperfect tense.) They are verbs which posit, evoke,

and describe, verbs which are devoid of all narrative qualities. They are in short, impressionistic verbs:

Elle mettait un bonheur de plus, une plénitude solide et heureuse, au milieu de toutes ces gaietés grasses. C'était une belle femme. Elle tenait la largeur de la porte, point trop grasse pourtant, forte de la gorge, dans la maturité de la trentaine. Elle venait de se lever, et déjà ses cheveux, lissés, collés et comme vernis, lui descendaient en petits bandeaux, plats sur les tempes. Cela la rendait très propre. Sa chair paisible avait cette blancheur transparente, cette peau fine et rosée des personnes qui vivent d'ordinaire dans les graisses et les viandes crues. Elle était sérieuse, plutôt, très calme et très lente, s'égayant du regard, les lèvres graves. Son col de linge empesé bridant sur son cou, ses manches blanches qui lui montaient jusqu'aux coudes, son tablier blanc cachant la point de ses souliers, se laissaient voir que des bouts de sa robe de cachemire noir, les épaules rondes, le corsage plein, dont le corset tenait l'étoffe, extrêmement. Dans tout ce blanc, le soleil brûlait. Mais, trempée de clarté, les cheveux bleus, la chair rose, les manches et la jupe éclatantes, elle ne clignait pas les paupières, elle prenait en toute tranquillité béate son bain de lumière matinale, les yeux doux, riant aux Halles débordantes. Elle avait un air de grande honnêteté. (63-64)

In addition to the comprehensive representation of a particular moment by the impressionistic use of nouns, verbs and adjectives, the impressionistic literary artist further represented one particular moment as unique by the use of figurative language, that is the simile and the metaphor. Just as nouns, verbs and adjectives are utilized in a particular manner by the impressionist, so too are similes and metaphors. The impressionistic simile, as do all similes, helps to make a particular representation more precise by providing a basis for comparison. The impressionistic simile however, is a more highly perfected simile in that the reality which serves as a

basis for comparison is evoked in an impressionistic manner, as in the following example:

Sur le carreau, à droite et à gauche, des femmes assises avaient devant elles des corbeilles carrées, pleines de bottes de roses, de violettes, de dahlias, de marguerites. Les bottes s'assombrissaient, pareilles à des taches de sang, palissaient doucement avec des gris argentés d'une grande délicatesse. (38)

Illustrated in the above simile are all of the basic principles of the impressionistic aesthetic. The form of the roses and daisies has been fragmented by the rising sun; they are reduced to "des taches de sang". As the form of the roses is fragmented the colors become more dominant. This is accomplished by the use of the verb "palir", a verb of color in the imperfect tense, which is modified by a prepositional phrase composed of color spots--"avec des gris argentés d'une grande délicatesse."

Utilizing this simile Zola has thereby fully represented the roses and daisies in a unique and transitory moment. The following similes utilized in describing the tenchs and the carp arriving in the markets are also wholly impressionistic:

On déballait les carpes du Rhin, mordorées, si belles avec leurs roussissures métalliques et dont les plaques, d'écaillés ressemblent à des émaux cloisonnés et bronzés; les tanches, sombres et magnifiques, pareilles à du cuivre rouge tache de vert-de-gris. (169)

In the following example the baskets of fish lined up on the sidewalks in the market area are compared to a school of fish:

Quand les mannes s'étalèrent Florent pût croire qu'un banc de poissons venait d'échouer là sur ce trottoir, ralant encore, avec les nacres roses, les coraux saignants, les perles laiteuses, toutes les moires, et toutes les paleurs glauques de l'océan. (165)

Just as the simile occupies an important position in the

art of the literary impressionist, so too does the metaphor. The specific nature of the metaphors utilized by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris can be traced to the historical phenomenon of artistic impressionism, which, it will be recalled, was born when Renoir, Sisley and Pissarro observed on the Seine near Argenteuil the action of sunlight on the water and the resultant decomposition of the sunlight into separate color spots. These early artists of impressionism had thus discovered a new form of artistic representation by using water as a point of departure. Just as these new artists of the 1860's had found water useful in representing their conception of reality so to did Zola in Le Ventre de Paris. Both Zola and the impressionistic artists thereby thematically underlined their principal aesthetic belief, that is, reality is composed of a series of unique moments which, like a flow of water, constantly flow on. This aesthetic belief is expressed thematically by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris by the use of metaphors which evoke water images.

Moser remarks in this connection:

L'impressionnisme est l'art de l'insaisissable, du fluide; c'est ce qui ressort non seulement de ses thèmes fluviaux et marins, mais encore de telles métaphores qui voient la matière sous le rapport de la fluidité.¹⁰⁹

In the following example not only did Zola utilize a metaphor evoking a water image but he sustained the metaphor throughout the one hundred and forty-eight words which follow the initial evocation:

¹⁰⁹Moser, p. 119.

Mais Claude était monté debout sur le banc d'enthousiasme. Il força son compagnon à admirer le jour se levant sur les légumes. O'était une mer. Elle s'étendait de la pointe Saint-Eustache à la rue des Halles, entre les deux groupes de pavillons. Et, aux deux bouts, dans les deux carrefours, le flot grandissait encore, les légumes submergeait les pavés. Le jour se levait lentement d'un gris très doux, lavant toutes choses d'une teinte claire d'aquarelle. Ces tas moutonnantes comme des flots pressés, ce fleuve de verdure qui semblait couler dans l'encaissement de la chaussée, pareil à la débacle des pluies d'automne, prenaient des ombres délicates et perlées, des violets attendries, des roses teintées de lait, des verts noyés dans les jaunes, toutes les paleurs qui font du ciel une soie changeante au lever du soleil; et, à mesure que l'incendie du matin montait en jets de flamme au fond de la rue Rambuteau, les légumes s'éveillaient davantage, sortaient du grand bleuissement trainant à terre. (45-46)

The image which is evoked by the sentence "O'étaient une mer" is sustained by the following: "le flot", "submergeait", "lavant", "aquarelle", "des flots pressés", "ce fleuve de verdure", "couler", "des pluies d'automne", "perlées," "des verts noyés", and "jets de flamme". A similar use of a water image is made by Zola to describe Florent's reaction to Les Halles as he looks out his window. In this instance the sustained metaphor is a continuation of the image evoked by the simile, "comme des mers grises":

Que de rêves il avait fait à cette hauteur, les yeux perdus sur les toitures élargies des pavillons. Le plus souvent il les voyait comme des mers grises qui lui parlaient de contrées lointaines. Par les nuits sans lune, elles s'assombrissaient, devenaient des lacs morts, des eaux noirs, empestés et croupies. Les nuits limpides les changeaient en fontaines de lumière; les rayons coulaient sur les deux étages de toits, mouillant les grandes plaques de zinc, débordant et retombant du bord des immenses vasques superposées. Les temps froids les roidissaient, les gelaient, ainsi que des baies de Norvège où glissent des patineurs, tandis que les chaleurs de juin les endormaient d'un sommeil lourd. (454)

The following sustain the metaphorical evocation in the preceeding example: "devenaient des lacs morts", "des eaux noires", "en fontaines", "coulaient", "mouillant", "débordant", "vasques", "gelaient", "des baies de Norvège".

All of the preceeding parts of speech, that is, nouns, adjectives, verbs, as well as the similes and metaphors when utilized in the manner discussed above and grouped together, either in a single sentence or in a paragraph, form what may be called an impressionistic tableau. Le Ventre de Paris is composed of six main descriptive tableau which correspond to the six main sections of the novel, chapters in which relatively little action takes place and wherein descriptive tableaux form the bulk of the novelistic material. The following is a sequential list of the descriptive tableaux and the principal narrative material in Le Ventre de Paris. Preceeding each of the six major tableau groups is a succinct summary of the principal narration presented therein.

SECTION ONE: FLORENT ARRIVING AUX HALLES

Wagons arriving in Paris at 2 A.M.; Madame Francois stopping her wagon and picking up Florent from the gutter; Florent recalling his past history; Florent helping Mme Francois unload her cart; the Central Markets waiting for the sun to come up; Les Halles in the morning light; Florent seeing for the second time the Rue Montorgueil where he was earlier captured and recalling his past; description of the Central Markets mixed with Florent's recollections; description of Les Halles at 4:30 A.M.; general description of Claude Lantier; Claude and Florent walking on the Rue Pirouette; Claude describes the area; Claude and Florent drinking at M. Lebigre's; Claude and Florent encounter Alexandre; description of the sunrise in the "quartier des Halles"; Claude and Florent "faire la tour" des Halles; description of Marjolin and Cadine;

Florent has the feeling that he is surrounded by food; description of Florent's fear in seeing familiar landmarks; Florent encounters Gavard, Mlle. Saget, and Mlle Lecoeur; Gavard recounts the recent events of Les Halles and takes Florent to the charcuterie of his brother, Quenu; exterior description of the "Charcuterie Quenu-Gradelle"; description of the products in the charcuterie; description of Lisa sunning herself in front of the butcher shop; the reunion of Florent with his brother and sister-in-law.

SECTION TWO: FLORENT JOINING THE SOCIETY OF LES HALLES

Florent's life preceeding his exile--his education, his parents; Florent as a teacher; the childhood of Quenu; Uncle Gradelle's disgust for politics; Florent's involvement in the plot to overthrow the Empire; Florent's exile; Quenu moves in with Uncle Gradelle and subsequently marries Lisa; death of Gradelle; Quenu and Lisa are prosperous merchants; description of Lisa sunning in front of the charcuterie; the arrival of Florent; Lisa devises a cover story--Florent will be Lisa's cousin who is returning from America; Florent in need of a job; Gavard and his history, his hate for the government; description of Mlle. Saget; Florent refuses to be market inspector; description of Mlle. Saget, Mme Lecoeur, and La Sariette, as well as Lisa rival, la belle normande, as they try to ascertain Florent's past; description of the products in the charcuterie; Florent recounting the story of the "monsieur mange par les betes"; Florent's story is mixed with a description of the charcuterie, its owners, and its products; Florent consents to be a market inspector.

SECTION THREE: FLORENT REJECTING THE SOCIETY OF LES HALLES

Florent as "inspecteur de la maree"; description of the fish beginning with the ocean fish and then the fresh water fish; M. Verlaque explains the job to Florent; description of "la belle Normande" and her stand; Florent begins to spend his evenings at M. Lebigre's where he finds others who share his political feelings; description of M. Lebigre's cafe; description of the people who come there every night; description of Robine, Logre, Charvet, Clemence, and Rose; description of Les Halles from Florent's window; Florent's difficulties as inspector; the Mehuduin family and their history; the battle

between Florent and "la belle normande"; the incident of Mme Taboureaux's maid and the spoiled brill; Florent closes "La belle normande's" booth for eight days; description of "la belle normande" and her son Muche; Muche's like for Florent; Florent teaches Muche to read and his war with "la belle poissonniere" ends; Florent bored with his job; description of the "poissons monotones"; description of the fish pavilion and its stench; Florent decides to again attempt to overthrow the Empire; Florent decides to continue giving lessons to Muche; Mlle. Saget attempts to clarify Florent's past history; the jealousies of Lisa and "la belle poissonniere"; the political discussions become more animated; Florent encourages Quenu to attend the meetings; Mlle. Saget and her group attempt to clarify Florent's past by convincing Lisa that her husband and her shop are going to be harmed; Lisa's doubts about Florent.

SECTION FOUR: FLORENT BEING REJECTED BY LISA, "LA REINE DES HALLES".

Description of Marjolin and Cadine; Cadine the flower seller and her flowers; description of Les Halles; Cadine and Marjolin growing up in the area of the Central Markets; their exploits in the poultry market; lengthy description of the baskets wherein they slept; description of "les Halles sous terre"; description of les Halles from the rooftops; Claude Lantier becomes a friend of Marjolin and Cadine; they walk throughout the entire area of the Central Markets expressing their personal preferences; description of Les Halles in the late afternoon; Leon, Cadine, and Marjolin steal food; Lisa tries to convince her husband that Florent is a threat to their security; Lisa announces that either Florent or she will have to leave; Florent senses her hate and decides to eat his meals elsewhere; Lisa becomes friendly with Gavard in an attempt to find out more about Florent; Marjolin conducts Lisa into the underground storage area in search of Gavard; description of the underground city; the incident of "mere Palette's" geese; description of the "pierres d'abbatage"; Marjolin attempts to seduce Lisa; Quenu suggests to Lisa that they attend the theatre; Lisa looks in Florent's room for clues about his personal life; great commotion in the street--someone has found Marjolin unconscious in the caves; Claude, Florent, and Madame Francois go to Nanterre for the day; description of life in the country; discussion of the battle between the "gras" and the "maigre"; description of the return trip to Paris.

SECTION FIVE: FLORENT BEING REJECTED BY LES HALLES

Lisa goes to speak to the Abbe Roustan; description of the interior of Saint-Eustache; Lisa gets advise from the abbe on what to do concerning Florent; Lisa goes to Florent's room and finds the first chapter of his study on Cayenne; She ultimately finds his plans for overthrowing the Empire; Lisa returns from Florent's room and finds Pauline missing; the incident of Pauline and Muche playing in the mud; Mademoiselle Saget rescues Pauline from Muche and through Pauline learns Florent's story; description of Mlle. Saget spreading the story of Florent's past in the "quartier des Halles"; description of La Sariette's fruit; description of the cheese in the cheese stalls; the "symphonie des fromages"; description of the cheese mixed with Mlle. Saget's gossip; the story of Florent's past is exaggerated and told everywhere; arguments for and against Florent; the news of Florent's past affects the whole area; even the vegetables and the fish and the products of the charcuterie are affected by this news; Lengthy descriptions of the changes in the "quartier des Halles"; Mlle. Saget keeps Lisa informed of the latest gossip concerning Florent; Florent asks for the money owed him from the inheritance; Lisa discovers the flags in Florent's room and runs to the police station; Florent wants the insurrection to take place immediately; description of Les Halles.

SECTION SIX: FLORENT BEING EXPELLED FROM LES HALLES

Florent makes more detailed plans; his walking trip through Paris; Florent encounters Claude who is looking for Marjolin; Marjolin is in the caves killing pigeons; Auguste tells Florent that the police came looking for him that morning; Lisa carries on as usual; the police search "la belle poissonniere's" room looking for traces of Florent and discover Muche's notebooks wherein he practiced writing the sentence: "Quand l'heure sonnera le coupable tombera."; Mlle. Saget runs to tell Lisa this latest news; Gavard, looking for Florent, goes to Florent's room and is captured by the police; the gossips run to Gavard's apartment and take what they want; Florent encounters "la mère Mehuduin" who tells him that a man was looking for him and that he is waiting for him at the Quenu charcuterie; Florent goes to his room and is captured by the police, before leaving he frees a caged bird; description of the capture; Florent is again deported, Logre and Lacaille are acquitted, Alexandre is

sentenced to two years of prison; Claude and Madame Francois discuss the arrest; description of Les Halles resuming their normal activity; Claude remarks: "Quels gredins que les honnetes gens."

Each of the separate descriptive tableaux listed above and all of the narrative material ARE built around the main subject of the novel--Les Halles. The narrative material, however, does not in any significant manner represent narration in the traditional meaning of the term. Just as the importance of the verb in the impressionistic sentence is minimized, so too is the importance of narration in the impressionistic novel minimized. Each of the six main sections of the novel is constructed around a motif, "les Halles". Narration in Le Ventre de Paris is a means utilized by Zola to portray comprehensively the movement of Les Halles as it is affected by the presence of Florent. As such, Le Ventre de Paris represents a series of six main impressionistic descriptive tableaux, a series not unlike the series of impressionistic canvases created by Monet and Pissarro around one central motif. Les Halles is thus presented at six precise and unique moments of its existence. Just as the Rouen Cathedral in Monet's series is portrayed at seven in the morning, so is Les Halles portrayed as Florent arrives in the area of the Central Markets; just as the cathedral is portrayed at noon, so too is Les Halles portrayed when Florent joins the world of the "gras" and becomes "inspecteur de la marée"; just as the cathedral is seen in the afternoon light, so too is Les Halles seen when Florent rejects the world of the fat; just

as the cathedral is portrayed in the fog, so too is Les Halles. portrayed when Lisa, "la reine des Halles", rejects Florent; just as the cathedral is portrayed in the rain, so too is Les Halles portrayed as it rejects Florent; just as the cathedral is portrayed in the winter, so too is Les Halles seen as it expells Florent, "le maigre" from its presence.

In both instances the subjects, whether Les Halles or the Rouen Cathedral, are secondary to the descriptions they evoke.

Moser remarks:

Traiter un sujet pour les tons et non pour le sujet lui-même, voilà ce qui distingue les impressionnistes des autres peintres.¹¹⁰

Moser further underlines this point in discussing Monet's triptyque "Mai":

Cette vérité immédiate de l'éclairage et de l'atmosphère fait la raison d'être de cette toile; qui ne saurait intéressé ni par le sujet ni par la composition, ni par le détail. Les impressionnistes ne composent plus. Ils choisissent, tout au plus, le site qui fera le sujet de leur toile et celui-ci leur importe si peu que Monet en viendra à ne plus le varier dans ses séries qu'il peindra d'après le même motif. Les séries seront la dernière conséquence d'une tendance qui commence à se manifester dès les premières oeuvres des impressionnistes, la tendance à ne retenir d'un sujet que les variations colorées, à ne retenir que la tonalité créée par les jeux de la lumière.¹¹¹

This point was also underlined by Mallarmé, who in October 1864 remarked:

J'ai enfin commencé mon Hérodiade, avec terreur car j'invente une langue qui doit nécessairement jaillir d'une poétique nouvelle, que je pourrais définir en

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 54.

deux mots: Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit. Le vers ne doit donc pas, là, se composer des mots, mais d'intentions, et toutes les paroles s'effacer devant la sensation.¹¹²

The plot of Le Ventre de Paris, although of importance, is of lesser importance than the description it evokes, a plot built around Florent. Yet it is not Florent who is the chief player in the novel. The chief player in the novel is "le ventre de Paris" itself. Yet the novel is convincing. It is convincing because of its art and not because of its intrigue. It is a triumph of description over narration. It is a technique analogous to that utilized by Molière in composing his comedies, that is, the plot serves as a pretext for the uniting the separate character descriptions and developments.

What then would appear to be narration in Le Ventre de Paris is nothing more than the movement caused in the "quartier des Halles" by the prescence of Florent, that is, in Le Ventre de Paris narration becomes description. Florent is a stimulus. He is the rain, the fog, the morning sun, the afternoon light. "Le ventre de Paris" is the Rouen Cathedral. In impressionistic art it is the individual dots of color which seem to vibrate on the surface of a canvas. In Le Ventre de Paris it is the people of Les Halles who vibrate and move as they react to Florent, either his absence or presence. In both instances the vibrations are identical.

At the same time, the inanimate objects of the "quartier des Halles", the fish, the flowers, the vegetables, the separate

¹¹²Reported by Moser, p. 87.

pavilions, are represented by Zola as vibrating color spots bathed in light. The pavilions are, as is the Rouen cathedral, portrayed at all times of the day and in all atmospheric conditions:

Les Halles before sunrise:

Mais ce qui le (Florent) suprenait, c'étaient aux deux bords de la rue, de gigantesques pavilions, dont les toits superposés lui semblaient grandir, s'étendre, se perdre, au fond d'un poudrolement de lueurs. Il revait, l'esprit affaibli, à une suite de palais, énormes et réguliers, d'une légèreté de cristal, allumant sur leurs facades les milles raies de flammes de persiennes continues et sans fin. (15)

Les Halles at sunrise:

Et Florent regardait les grandes Halles sortir de l'ombre, sortir du rêve où il les avait vues, allongeant à l'infini leurs palais à jour. Elles se solidifiaient, d'un gris verdâtre, plus géantes encore, avec leur mature prodigieuse, supportant les nappes sans fin de leurs toits. Elles entassaient leurs masses géométriques; et, quand toutes les clartés intérieures furent éteintes, qu'elles baignèrent dans le jour levant, carrées, uniformes, elles apparurent comment une machine moderne à vapeur, quelque chaudière destinée à la digestion d'un peuple, gigantesque ventre de métal, bouillonnée, rivée, faite de bois, de verre et de fonte, d'une élégance et d'une puissance de moteur mécanique, fonctionnant là, avec la chaleur de chauffage, l'étourdissement, le branle furieux des roues. (44-45)

Les Halles at midday:

Et dans les grandes tournées, lorsque tous trois, Claude, Cadine et Marjolin, rôdaient autour des Halles, ils apercevaient, par chaque bout de rue, un coin du géant de fonte. C'étaient des échappées brusques, des architectures imprévues, le même horizon s'offrant sans cesse sous des aspects divers. Claude se retournait, surtout Rue Montmartre, après avoir passé l'église. Au loin, les Halles, vues de biais, l'enthousiasmaient; une grande arcade, une porte haute, béante, s'ouvrait; puis les pavilions s'entassaient, avec leurs deux étages de toits, leurs persiennes continues, leurs

stores immenses; on eût dit des profils de maisons et de palais superposés, une babylone de métal, d'une légèreté hindoue, traversée par des terrasses suspendues, des couloirs aériens, des ponts volants jetés sur le vide. Ils revenaient toujours là, à cette ville autour de laquelle ils flanaient, sans pouvoir la quitter de plus de cent pas. (307-08)

Les Halles at sunset:

Il (Florent) se plaisait aussi, le soir, aux beaux couchers de soleil, qui découpaient en noir les fines dentelles des Halles, sur les lueurs rouges du ciel; la lumière de cinq heures, la poussière volante des derniers rayons, entraient par toutes les baies, par toutes les raies des persiennes; c'était comme un transparent lumineux et dépoli, où se dessinaient les arrêts minces des piliers, les courbes élégantes des charpentes, les figures géométriques des toitures. Il s'emplissait les yeux de cette immense épure lavée à l'encre de chine sur un velin phosphorescent, reprenant son rêve de quelque machine colossale, avec ses roues, ses leviers, ses balanciers, entrevue dans la pourpre sombre du charbon flambant sous la chaudière. (221-22)

Les Halles "par les soirées de flamme":

Mais, par les soirées de flamme, quand les puanteurs montaient, traversant d'un frisson les grands rayons jaunes, comme des fumées chaudes, les nausées le secouaient de nouveau, son rêve s'égarait, à s'imaginer des étuves géantes, des cuves infectes d'équarrisseur où fondait la mauvaise graisse d'un peuple. (222)

Les Halles on cold nights:

Il restait là quelques minutes (à sa fenêtre), aspirant fortement l'air frais qui lui venait de la Seine, par-dessus les maisons de la rue de Rivoli. En bas, confusément, les toitures des Halles étalaient leurs nappes grises. C'était comme des lacs endormis, au milieu desquels le reflet furtif de quelque vitre allumait la lueur argentée d'un flot. Au loin les toits des pavillons de la boucherie et de la valée s'assombrissaient encore, n'étaient plus que des entassements de ténèbres reculant l'horizon. Il jouissait du regard ce grand morceau de ciel qu'il avait en face de lui, de cet immense développement des Halles, qui lui donnait, au milieu des rues étranglées de Paris, la vision d'un bord de mer, avec les eaux mortes et ardoisées d'une baie, à peine frissonnantes du roulement lointain de la houle. (193)

Les Halles on nights when the moon is not visible:

Par les nuits sans lune, elles s'assombrissaient; devenaient des lacs morts, des eaux noires, empestées et croupies. (454)

Les Halles "par les nuits limpides":

Les nuits limpides les changeaient en fontaines de lumière; les rayons coulaient sur les deux étages de toits, mouillant les grandes plaques de zinc, débordant et retombant au bord de ces immenses vasques superposées. (454)

Les Halles could thus be portrayed at all hours of the day and in all atmospheric conditions since the principal goal sought by Zola was not the representation of the Central Markets as ends in themselves but as a means to the achievement of light and color. This goal is stated in Le Ventre de Paris as follows:

A chaque heure le jeux de lumière changeaient ainsi les profils des Halles, depuis les bleuissements du matin et les ombres de midi, jusqu'à l'incendie du soleil couchant, s'éteignant dans la cendre grise de la crépuscule. (222)

When both the vibrations of the inanimate objects of Les Halles and the vibrations or reactions of the people of Les Halles are viewed collectively Le Ventre de Paris assumes a wholly impressionistic finish, that is, it becomes an impressionistic canvas upon which symmetrical form has been reduced to a vibrating surface of color spots bathed in light.

In addition to the syntactical manifestations of the impressionist aesthetic, there are numerous techniques utilized by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris that can be considered as impressionistic. These techniques, not based on grammatical constructions, further underline the essentially impressionistic structure of Le Ventre de Paris. These techniques are not, however, for the most part, unique to the novels of Emile Zola and the canvases of the impressionists. The majority of these techniques represent a general trend or evolution in nineteenth century French literature, an evolution which culminated in the novels of Zola and in the canvases of the impressionists, that is, a gradual evolution towards an art that was essentially descriptive and not narrative.

The most fundamental of these techniques is the presentation of a particular reality in its most momentary state, that is, the action of fluid reality is interrupted while the artist analyzes and describes that particular reality held in suspension. Just as Monet suspended the motion of fluid reality in order to describe the Rouen Cathedral, so too does Emile Zola suspend the motion of fluid reality in order to describe Florent. When the description and analysis of suspended reality is completed, fluid reality again assumes its normal motion. This technique is utilized by Zola in the scene wherein Florent interrupts the procession of wagons on their way to Les Halles:

Balthazar, le cheval de Madame Francois, une bête trop grasse, tenait la tête de la file. Il marchait, dormant

à demi, dodelinant des oreilles, lorsqu'à la hauteur de la rue de Longchamp, un sursaut de peur le planta net sur ses quatre pieds. Les autres bêtes vinrent donner de la tête contre le cul des voitures et la file s'arrêta, avec la secousse des ferrailles, au milieu des jurements des charretiers réveillés. (6)

Following the stopping of Balthazar and the other horses in the procession is the initial presentation of Florent. When this presentation has been accomplished the motion of the procession of wagons is again resumed;

Elle (Madame Francois) remonta, s'adossa contre la planchette, assise de biais, tenant les gardes de Balthazar, qui se remit en marche, se rendormant, dodelinant des oreilles. Les autres suivrent, la file reprit son allure lente dans le noir. (8-9)

This technique is built into the overall structure of the novel. In a larger sense Florent assumes for Le Ventre de Paris the role that he assumed for the scene wherein he is first introduced; just as the action of Balthazar and the other horses is interrupted by Florent lying in the gutter, so is the action of the "quartier des Halles" interrupted or altered by the presence of Florent. When Florent is taken into the cart of Madame Francois the action of the procession resumes normally. When Florent is expelled from the "quartier des Halles" the city again resumes its normal rhythm. It is remarked immediately after Florent is taken into the cart of Madame Francois:

Paris, pareil à un pan de ciel étoilé, tombé sur un coin de la terre noire, lui apparût (Florent) sévère et comme fâché de son retour.

The interruption that Florent causes by his return causes the material of the novel. When he is again expelled from the

"quartier des Halles" and from Paris, it is remarked:

Le soleil, au ras des toits, mettait des rayons roses, des nappes tombantes qui touchaient déjà les pavés. Et Claude sentait un réveil de gaieté dans les grandes Halles sonores, dans le quartier empli de nourritures entassées. C'était comme une joie de guérison, un tapage plus haut de gens soulagés enfin d'un poids qui leur genait l'estomac. (498)

The complete resumption of a normal routine is demonstrated by Lisa and her actions. The day following Florent's exile she again takes her sun bath on the threshold of the charcuterie. Only once before does she sun herself in the novel--the day Florent arrived in the "quartier des Halles". The following is a description of Lisa sunning herself the day after Florent is deported for the second time:

A sa (Claude) gauche, la belle Lisa, au seuil de la charcuterie, tenait toute la largeur de la porte. Jamais son linge n'avait eu une telle blancheur; jamais sa chair, reposée, sa face rose, ne s'était encadrée dans les bandeaux mieux lissés. Elle montrait un grand calme repu, une tranquillité énorme que rien ne troublait, pas même un sourire. C'était l'apaisement absolu, une félicité complète, sans secousse, sans vie, baignant dans l'air chaud. Son corsage tendu digérait encore le bonheur de la veille; ses mains potelées, perdues dans le tablier, ne se tendaient même pas pour prendre le bonheur de la journée, certaines qu'il viendrait à elles. (501)

Even the products of the charcuterie were affected by Florent's absence:

Et à côté l'étalage avait une félicité pareille; il était guéri, les langues fourrées s'allongeaient plus rouges et plus saines, les jambonneaux reprenaient leurs bonnes figures jaunes, les guirlandes de saucisses n'avaient plus cet air désespéré qui navrait Quenu. Un gros rire sonnait au fond, dans la cuisine, accompagné d'un tintamarre rejouissant de casseroles. La charcuterie suait de nouveau la santé, une santé

grasse. Les bandes de lard entrevues, les moitiés de cochon pendues contre les marbiers, mettaient là des rondeurs de ventre tout un triomphe du ventre, tandis que Lisa, immobile, avec sa carrure digne, donnait aux Halles le bonheur matinal de ses grands yeux de forte mangeuse. (501)

The normal routine of the world of the fat thus began again following Florent's deportation. This "stopping and starting" technique utilized by Zola is not unlike that utilized by all of the major impressionistic artists in portraying reality in its most transitory state. It is in short an impressionistic technique.

Environment is of major importance to both the naturalistic and impressionistic aesthetics. It is the milieu as Zola remarked, "qui complète et détermine l'homme." The impressionistic artists, without expressly stating the importance of milieu to their aesthetic, demonstrated its importance repeatedly in their canvases in that the subject of the majority of their works was not the reality represented but the atmospheric effects they evoked in specific geographical locations. It is an environment which when represented artistically on a canvas appears as a vibrating tissue of small dots of color which when viewed from a distance seem to float freely on the surface of the canvas not defining a single form, but perhaps two. So too in the literature of impressionism does the description of one reality flow into the description of another. Cadine, for example, assumes the characteristics of the flowers she sells:

Elle vivait dans les roses, dans les lilas, dans les giroflées, dans les muguets. Lui, flairant sa jupe, longuement en manière de jeu, semblait chercher,

finissait par dire: "Ca sent le muguet." Il (Marjolin) montait la taille, au corsage, reniflait plus fort: "Ca sent la giroflée." Et aux manches, à la jointure des poignets: "Ca sent le lilas." Et à la nuque, tout autour du cou, sur les joues, sur les lèvres: "Ca sent la rose." Cadine riait, l'appelait "bêta", lui criait de finir, parce qu'il lui faisait des chatouilles avec le bout de son nez. Elle avait une haleine de jasmin. Elle était un bouquet vivant. (285-86)

At the same time the flowers take on the characteristics of

Cadine:

En quelques semaines elle avait acquis de l'habileté et une grace originale. Ses bouquets ne plaisaient pas à tout le monde; ils faisaient sourire, et ils inquiétaient, par un côté de naïveté cruelle. Les rouges y dominaient, coupés de tons violents, de bleus, de jaunes, de violets, d'une charme barbare. Les matins où elle pinçait Marjolin, où elle le taquinait à le faire pleurer elle avait des bouquets féroces, des bouquets de fille en colère, aux parfums rudes, aux couleurs irritées. D'autres matins, quand elle était attendrie par quelque peine ou par quelque joie, elle trouvait des bouquets d'un gris d'argent, très doux, voilés, d'une odeur discrète. Puis c'étaient des roses, saignantes comme des coeurs ouverts, dans des lacs d'oeillets blancs; des glaïeuls fauves, montant en panaches de flammes parmi des verdures éffarées; des tapisseries de Smyre, aux dessins compliqués, faites fleur à fleur, ainsi que sur un canevas; des éventails moires, s'élargissant avec des douceurs de dentelle; des puretés adorables, des tailles épaissies, des rêves à mettre dans les mains des harengères ou des marquises, des maladresses de vierge et des ardeurs sensuelles de fille, toute la fantaisie exquise d'une gamine de douze ans, dans laquelle la femme s'éveillait. (286-87)

A similar effect is represented in the descriptions of La Sariette and her fruit stand and the old lady selling fruit in the adjoining stand:

La Sariette vivait là, comme dans un verger, avec des griseries d'odeurs; les fruits à bas prix, les cerises, les prunes, les fraises, entassés devant elle sur des paniers plats, garnis de papier, se meurtrissaient, tachaient l'étalage de jus fort qui fumait dans la

chaleur. Elle sentait aussi la tête lui tourner, en juillet, par les après-midi brûlants, lorsque les melons l'entouraient d'une puissante vapeur de musc. Alors, ivre, montrant plus de chair sous son fichu, à peine mûre et toute fraîche de printemps, elle tenait la bouche, elle inspirait des envies de maraude. C'était elle, c'étaient ses bras, c'était son cou, qui donnaient à ses fruits cette vie amoureuse, cette tiédeur, satinée de femme. Sur le banc de vente, à côté, une vieille marchande, une ivrognesse affreuse, n'étalait que des pommes ridées, des poires pendantes comme des seins vidés, des abricots cadavreux d'une jaune de sorcière. (380-81)

Similarly, Florent's decision to attempt to again overthrow the Empire is the result of his environment. The "quartier des Halles" had begun to permeate Florent to such an extent that he no longer felt himself to be an individual. His environment had, or would have ultimately, effaced Florent in that he, the maigre", was being dominated by the "gras". It is an identical technique that was utilized by Monet in the "Nymphéas" series. The subject of this series, the lillies, is in the end almost totally engulfed, that is the painting becomes primarily a study of light and color. Light and color have effaced the lillies in much the same manner that Florent was threatened by effacement by the "gras" in the "quartier des Halles". Florent's resumption of political activity is an attempt to combat such an assimilation:

Il avait trop souffert par elle (la politique) pour ne pas en faire l'occupation chère de sa vie. Il fut devenu, sans le milieu, et les circonstances, un bon professeur de province, heureux de la paix de sa petite ville. Mais l'on avait traité en loup, il se trouvait maintenant comme marqué par l'exil pour quelque besogne de combat. Son malaise nerveux, n'était que le réveil des longues songeries de Cayenne, de ses amertures en face de souffrances imméritées, de ses serments de venger un jour, l'humanité traitée à coups de fouet et la justice foulée aux pieds. Les Halles géantes, les nourritures débordantes et fortes, avaient hate la crise. Elles lui semblaient la bête satisfaite et digérant, Paris entre-

paillé, cuvant sa graisse, appuyant sourdement l'empire. Elles mettaient autour de lui des gorges énormes, des reins monstrueux, des faces rondes, comme de continuels arguments contre sa maigreur de martyr, son visage jaune de mécontent. C'était le ventre boutiquier, le ventre de l'honnêteté moyenne, se ballonnant, heureux, luisant au soleil, trouvant que tout allait pour le mieux, que jamais les gens de mœurs paisibles n'avaient engraisé si bellement. Alors, il se sentit les poings serrés, prêt à la lutte, plus irrité par la pensée de son exil, qu'il ne l'était en rentrant en France. La haine le reprit tout entier.

Florent's decision to attempt again to overthrow the Second Empire was determined, as has just been demonstrated, by the "quartier des Halles" in general. Specifically his decision was prompted by the smell of the fish in the "pavillon de la marée." The representation of a specific olfactory sensation, although not possible in art, is wholly possible in literature. Yet even though such a representation is not possible in art, it is a type of representation which is wholly impressionistic, that is, the representation of a reality based on a sensory reaction. In Le Ventre de Paris Zola presents both the visual milieu and the olfactory milieu. Both represent sensory reactions to environment. The following is Florent's reaction to his olfactory milieu:

Les premiers mois il ne souffrait pas trop de cette odeur pénétrante. L'hiver était rude; le verglas changeait les allées en miroirs, les glaçons mettaient des guipures blanches aux tables de marbre et aux fontaines. Le matin, il fallait allumer de petits rechauds sous les robinets pour obtenir un filet d'eau. Les poissons, gelés, la queue tordue, ternes et rudes comme des métaux dépolis, sonnaient avec un bruit cassant de fonte pale. Jusqu'en février, le pavillon resta lamenable, hérissée, désolée, dans son linceul de glace. Mais vinrent les dégels, les temps mous, les brouillards

et les pluies de mars. Alors les poissons s'amollirent, se noyèrent; des senteurs de chairs tournées, se mêlèrent aux souffles fades de boue qui venaient des rue voisines. Puanteur vague encore, douceur écouerante d'humidité, trainant au ras du sol. Puis dans les après-midi ardent de juin la puanteur monta, alourdit l'air d'une buée pestilentielle. On ouvrait les fenêtres supérieures, de grands stores de toile grise pendaient sous le soleil brulant, une pluie de feu tombant sur les Halles, les chauffait comme un four de toile; et pas un vent ne balayait cette vapeur de marée pourrie. Les bandes de vente fumaient. Il avait supporté des puanteurs aussi terribles; mais elles venaient non pas du ventre. . . Son estomac étroit d'un homme maigre se revoltait, en passant devant ces étalages de poissons mouillés à grande eau, qu'un coup de chaleur gatait. Ils le nourrissaient de leurs senteurs fortes, le suffoquaient, comme s'il avait eu une indigestion d'odeurs. (219-21)

It is further remarked:

Il souffrait encore de ce milieu grossier, dont les paroles et les gestes semblaient avoir pris de l'odeur. (222)

Florent therefore attempted to destroy the odor by destroying the Second Empire. It is an attempt on the part of Florent to avoid total assimilation of himself by the environment, an environment whose qualities he could not accept and which continually imposed themselves on him.

A similar transfer of characteristics is represented in the scene wherein Mlle. Saget recounts the carefully guarded story of Florent's past to Madame Lecoeur and La Sariette while the three gossips stand in Mme Lecoeur's cheese shop:

Alors commencaient les puanteurs, les monts d'or, jaune clair, puant une odeur douceâtre; troyés, très épais, meutris sur les bords, d'appreté déjà plus forte, ajoutant une fétidité de cave humide; les camembert, d'un fumet de gibier trop faisande; les neufchatel, les limbourg, les marolles, les pont-l'évêque, carrés, mettant chacun leur note aigue et particulière dans

cette phrase rude jusqu'à la nausée; les livarot, teints de rouges, terribles à la gorge comme une vapeur de soufre; puis enfin, par-dessus tous les autres, les olivet; enveloppés de feuilles de noyer, ainsi que ces charognes que les paysans couvrent de branches, au bord d'un champ, fumantes au soleil. (387)

Le soleil oblique entraît sous le pavillon, les fromages puaient plus fort. (389)

Elles (Saget, Lecœur, La Sariette) restaient debout, se saluant dans le bouquet final des fromages. Tous à cette heure donnaient à la fois. C'était une cacophonie de souffles infects, depuis les lourdeurs molles des pâtes cuites, du gruyère et du hollande, jusqu'aux pointes alcalines de l'olivet. Il y avait des renfolements sourds de cantal, du chester, des fromages de chevre. . . . Puis les odeurs s'effaraient, roulaient les uns sur les autres, s'épaissaient des bouffées du port-salut, du limbourg, du gérôme, du marolles, du bivarot, du pont-l'évêque, peu à peu confondues, épanouies en une seule explosion de puanteurs. Cela s'épandait, se soutenait, au milieu du vibration général, n'ayant plus de parfums distincts, d'un vertige continu de nausée et d'une force terrible d'asphyxie. Cependant il semblait que c'étaient les paroles de Mlle. Saget qui puaient si fort. (395-96)

In this instance Zola has achieved the same effect that he achieved in comparing Cadine's flowers to Cadine and vice versa. The qualities of the cheese become those of Mlle. Saget. Zola has thus realized a wholly impressionistic representation utilizing a type of sensory evidence that cannot be represented in impressionistic art, that is, the olfactory milieu.

Zola, in portraying impressionistically a particular reality, represented, as did the impressionist artists, not only the momentary state of an object, but also considered its total history, that is, its past and its future. Charles Hartung underlines this point as follows:

The fact that the impressionist strives for the sense of immediacy does not mean that he is solely concerned with representing external objects and events. The basic assumption of impressionism is that of a situation involving a person in immediate interaction with all phases of his environment. This means that the impressionist artist takes into account not only immediately perceived external objects but also personal feelings and remembered sensations as they merge with the external elements of a situation. The situation is assumed to have objective existence, but it is presented through the workings of an individual mind. For the impressionist the focus of reality is subjective and the past, present and future are all implicit in the flow of immediate experience. ¹¹³

Hartung, although overemphasizing the role that the past and the future play in the representation of a unique moment in the perpetuum of time, has nonetheless underlined an essential technique utilized by Zola and the impressionist artists, that is, the representation of the complete history of the artistic material. The history of the object represented is not portrayed in one canvas or in one tableau as Hartung would seem to imply, but by a means fundamental to much impressionistic art, primarily that of Monet, that is, the use of a motif as a basis of composition. Monet's "Gare Saint Lazare" series, for example, is composed of numerous moments of representation, that is, at all moments of the day and in all atmospheric conditions. In such a presentation, Monet has thereby given what can be considered a comprehensive view or history of the train station. Just as Monet portrayed in the "Gare Saint Lazare" series the history of the train station, so did Zola portray Florent in Le Ventre de Paris, who in the following scene reacts directly

¹¹³Charles Hartung, Browning and Impressionism (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1953), p. 31.

to a new and immediate impression and subsequently fits this impression into the context of personal experience:

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Florent écoutait mal les explications de Monsieur Verlaque. Une barre de soleil, tombant du haut vitrage vint allumer ces couleurs précieuses, lavées et attendries par la vague, irisées et fondues dans les tons de chair des coquillages, l'opale des merlans, la nacre des harengs, l'or des rougets, la robe lamée des macaqueureaux, les grandes pièces d'argenterie des saumons. C'était comme les écrins, vidés à terre, de quelque fille des eaux, des parures inouïes et bizarres, un ruissellement, un entassement de colliers, de bracelets monstrueux, de broches gigantesques, de bijoux bizarres dont l'usage échappait. Sur le dos des raies et des chiens de mer, de grosses pierres sombres, violâtres, verdâtres, s'enchassaient dans un métal noirci; et les minces barres des équilles, les queues et les nageoires des éperlans, avaient des délicatesses de bijouterie fine. Mais ce qui montait à la face de Florent, c'était un souffle frais, un vent de mer qu'il reconnaissait, amer et salé. Il se souvenait des côtes de la Guyanne, des beaux temps de la traversée. Il lui semblait qu'une baie était là, quand l'eau se retire et que les algues fument au soleil; les roches mises à nu s'essuient, le gravier exhale une haleine forte de marée. Autour de lui, le poisson, d'une grande fraîcheur, avait un bon parfum, ce parfum un peu âpre et irritant qui déprave l'appétit. (167-68)

Florent similarly recalls the salt air in the following scene:

Une buée d'humidité montait, une poussière de pluie qui soufflait au visage de Florent cette haleine fraîche, ce vent de mer qu'il reconnaissait, amer et salé; tandis que les premiers poissons étales, les nacres roses, les coraux saignants, les perles laiteuses, toutes les paleurs glaques de l'océan. (176)

These remembered sensations are placed into the context of personal experience not through reason but rather in an instantaneous and un-reasoned manner. The recollection is immediate as in the works of Proust: "Le phénomène est saisi dans une impression immédiate comme un fait simple: les causes comme les suites n'intéressent pas."¹¹⁴ In the following scene, Florent

¹¹⁴Charles Bally, Impressionnisme et grammaire (Genève: Sonor, 1920), pp. 261-79.

standing near the Eglise Saint Eustache, the location where he had been first captured by the police, does not immediately recognize the area because of his immediate reaction to Les Halles. He later determines that he is standing in front of the Eglise Saint Eustache:

Il était au bord d'une large rue, qu'il ne reconnaissait pas. (14)

. . . au ras du trottoir, il n'y avait encore de bien éveillé que les lanternes dansant au bout des bras invisible, enjambant d'un saut le sommeil qui traînait là, gens et légumes en tas, attendant le jour. Mais ce qui le suprenait, c'étaient aux deux bords de la rue, de gigantesques pavillons, dont les toits superposés, lui semblaient grandir, s'étendre, se perdre, au fond d'un poudrolement de lueurs. Il revait, l'esprit affaibli, à une suite de palais, énormes et régulières, d'une légèreté de cristal, allumant sur leurs facades les milles raies de flammes de persiennes continues et sans fin. Il tourna la tête fâché d'ignorer où il était, inquiet par cette vision colossale et géante; et comme il levait les yeux il apercut le cadran lumineux de Saint Eustache, avec la masse grise de l'église. Cela l'étonna profondément. Il était à la pointe Saint Eustache. (15-16)

A similar technique is utilized in the presentation of the main characters in Le Ventre de Paris. The following information, for example, is given by Zola concerning Florent, yet the reader does not yet know who the author is describing:

C'était un homme vautré tout de son long, les bras étendus, tombe la face dans la poussière. Il paraissait d'une longueur extraordinaire, maigre comme une branche sèche. (7)

Il était lamentable, avec son pantalon noir, sa redingote noire, tout éfiloches, montrant les sécheresses des os. Sa casquette, de gros drap noir, rabattue peureusement sur les sourcils, découvrait deux grands yeux bruns, d'une singulière douceur, dans un visage dur et tourmenté. Madame Francois pensa qu'il était trop maigre pour avoir bu. (7-8)

L'homme que Madame Francois venait de recueillir, couché sur le ventre, avait ses longues jambes perdues dans le tas de navets qui emplissaient le cul de la voiture. (9)

Florent finally remarks:

Je me nomme Florent, je viens de loin. . .je vous demande excuse, je suis si fatigué que cela m'est pénible de parler. (10)

The technique utilized by Zola in presenting Florent is utilized repeatedly in Le Ventre de Paris. It is one of the principal means utilized in presenting new characters and environments. It is a wholly impressionistic technique in that the effect produced initially by a new character or environment is more important than the character or environment; just as in the art of impressionism where the subject of a canvas was secondary to the effect produced by the object or person in a particular milieu at a particular time of day. It is a technique which can completely efface the individual personality traits of a person or the salient characteristics of an object. When dealing with people it leads to a series of sobriquets that evoke the person in question. For example, Madame Lecoœur is referred to as "la grande sèche"; Mlle. Saget--"la petite vieille"; Lousie Mehudin--"la belle Normande"; Florent--"le maigre"; Lisa Quenu--"la belle charcutière"; La mère Mehudin--"La Normande", etc. When referring to objects it leads to a series of descriptions of realities whose principal features are reduced to a hazy impression. In the following example, Les Halles are referred to as "de formes grises":

Entre les arrêtes fines des piliers, ces minces barres jaunes mettaient des échelles de lumière, qui montaient

jusqu'à la ligne sombre des premiers toits, qui gravissaient l'entassement des toits, posant dans leur carrure les grandes carcasses à jour de salles immenses, où traînaient, sous le jaunissement du gaz, un pêle-mêle de formes grises, effacées et dormantes. (16)

In many instances the effacement of the distinct characteristics of objects is caused by light; either a relative absence of light or a super-abundance of light which causes an object to be decomposed into color spots which do not rigidly define or outline any particular form. In the following description of the vegetables and the flowers at 4:30 A.M. the colors are more noticeable than the objects to which they belong as is seen by the pre-nominal position of the adjective of color:

On ne voyait encore, dans la clarté brusque et tour-nante des lanternes, que l'épanouissement d'un paquet d'artichauts, les verts délicats des salades, le corail rose des carottes, l'ivoire mat des navets, et ces éclairs de couleurs intenses filaient le long des tas, avec les lanternes. (25)

Pres d'une corbeille une bougie allumée mettait la sur tout le noir d'alentour, une chanson aigue de couleur, les panachures vives des marguerites, le rouge saignant des dahlias, le bleuissement des violettes, les chairs vivantes des roses. (38)

In the following example the super abundance of light reduces the fish first to colors and then they are treated as objects:

Une barre de soleil, tombant du haut vitrage de la rue couverte, vint allumer ces couleurs précieuses, lavées et attendries par la vague, irisées et fondues dans les tons de chair des coquillages, l'opale des merlans, la nacre des macqueureaux, l'or des rougets, la robe lamée des harengs, les grandes pièces d'argenterie des saumons. (167-68)

An effect not unlike that produced by the color spots in the preceeding examples is achieved by Zola in Le Ventre de Paris without utilizing color spots. It is produced by the repetition

of certain principal descriptive words. In impressionistic art, as has been demonstrated in Chapter I, color spots were juxtaposed on the surface of a canvas unblended. These distinct dots when viewed from a short distance defined no form or gave no impression. Only when these dots were viewed collectively from a distance was an impression produced. Chesneau remarked in 1875 about Monet's "Boulevard des Capucines":

A distance, dans ce frémissement de grands ombres et de grandes lumières, on salue un chef-d'oeuvre. Vous approchez, tout s'évanouit, il reste un chaos de raclures de palette indechiffirable.¹¹⁵

Zola has produced an identical impressionistic effect in Le Ventre de Paris by utilizing throughout the novel two main categories of descriptive words, words which underline the essential antithetical structure of the novel itself, that is "gras" and "maigre". Very early in the novel Zola placed a dot of color on his canvas when he characterized Florent as "maigre". This descriptive adjective was subsequently applied to every aspect of Florent's thought and action. Les Halles and its inhabitants, on the other hand, are characterized as "gras". The following list of passages from Le Ventre de Paris indicates the density of repetition of the general descriptive labels "gras" and "maigre":

- 1) Non la faim ne l'avait plus quitté. . . Il (Florent) était devenu sec, l'estomac rétréci, la peau collée aux os; et il retrouvait Paris, gras, superbe, débordant de nourriture. (21)
- 2) Un capable d'être resté trois jours sans manger était pour Lisa une personne absolument dangereuse. (154)
- 3) Il (Florent) était gris de misère, de lassitude et de faim. (54)

4) Aveuglé, noyé, les oreilles sonnantes, l'estomac écrasé par tout ce qu'il avait vu, devinant de nouvelles et incessantes profondeurs de nourriture, il demanda grace, et une douleur le prit; de mourir ainsi de faim dans Paris gorge, dans ce reveil fulgurant aux Halles.

(57)

5) Sa chair, paisible avait cette blancheur transparente cette peau fine et rosée des personnes qui vivent d'ordinaire dans les graisses et les viandes crues. (63)

6) Alors, il vit la maigreur de Florent. (65) Tu n'a pas embelli, la-bas....Moi, j'ai engraisé. que veux-tu? Il (Quenu) était gras en effet, trop gras pour ses 30 ans. (66)

7) Ils suaient la santé, ils étaient superbes, carés, luisants; ils (les Quenu) le (Florent) regardaient avec l'étonnement de gens très gras pris d'une vague inquiétude en face d'un maigre. Et le chat lui-même, dont la peau petait la graisse, arrondissait ses yeux jaunes, l'examinant d'un air déflant. (66)

8) Quenu and Florent as children in Paris: L'ainé avait beau maigrir, brûlé par les ardeurs de son père, le cadet avait beau engraisser, en digne fils de Normand; ils s'aimaient dans leur mère commune. (74)

9) Ils (Lisa and Quenu) n'aimaient pas le travail salopé, ils voulaient travailler à leur aise, sans se maigrir de soucis en bonnes gens qui tiennent à bien vivre. (92) Elle avait écarté soigneusement toutes les cause possibles de trouble, laissant couler les journées au milieu de cet air gras, de cette prospérité alourdie. (93)

10) Il (Quenu) dit à son frère qu'il se chargeait de le rendre gras. (100) A table, Quenu le bourrait de nourriture. (101)

11) Le désintéressement de cet homme maigre l' (Lisa) avait frappée; elle éprouvait pour lui une sorte de respect mêlé d'une peur vague. (111)

12) Elle (Lisa) ressemblait à un ventre. (114)

13) Florent se sentait importun; il avait conscience de la façon malapprise dont il était tombé au milieu de ce monde gras en maigre naïf; il s'avouait nettement qu'il dérangeait tout le grand quartier. (136)

14) Le vent emportait de ses (Florent) vêtements cette senteur grasse de la charcuterie, dont il était tout alangui. (136)

15) Le gaz brûlait tranquille, la chaleur du fourneau était très douce, toute la graisse de la cuisine luisait dans un bien être de digestion large. (145)

16) Il (Florent) glissait à la lacheté heureuse de cette digestion continu du milieu gras où il vivait depuis quinze jours. (172)

17) La mère Mehudin gardait rancune au "grand maigre" comme elle le nommait d'une façon méprisante. (186)

18) (Clemence) C'était un garçon osseux, aussi soigneusement rasé, avec un nez maigre et des lèvres minces. (216)

19) Son estomac étroit d'homme maigre se révoltait, en passant devant ces étalages de poissons mouillés à grande eau qu'un coup de chaleur gâtait. (220-21)

20) Il (Florent) souffrait de ce milieu grossier, dont les paroles et les gestes semblaient avoir pris de l'odeur. (222)

21) Les Halles géantes, les nourritures débordantes et fortes avaient hâte la crise. . . Elles mettaient autour de lui des gorges énormes, des reins monstrueux, des faces rondes, comme de continuels arguments contre sa maigreur de martyr; c'était le ventre boutiquier, le ventre de l'honnêteté moyenne, se ballonnant, heureux, luisant au soleil, trouvant que tout allait pour le mieux, que jamais les gens de moeurs paisibles n'avaient engraisé si bellement. (216)

22) Il (Florent) a l'oeil faux. . . puis les maigres, je (la mère Mehudin) m'en défie. Un homme maigre, c'est capable de tout. Jamais je n'en ai rencontré de bon. (235)

23) (Florent and La Normande) Ses os de maigre avaient une angoisse, au contact des poitrines grasses. (235)

24) Mais dans l'insistance de Lisa, il y avait cette haine, cette méfiance des maigres. (244)

25) Cependant Quenu se rappelait une phrase de Charyet, cette fois, qui déclarait que "ces bourgeois empates, ces boutiquiers engraisés, pretant leur soutien à un gouvernement d'ingestion générale, devaient être jetés les premiers au cloaque." C'était grâce à eux, à leur égoïsme de ventre, que le despotisme s'imposait et rongait une nation (268)

The continual repetition of words evoking images that are of the general categories "gras" and "maigre" reaches a crescendo at the end of the fourth chapter of Le Ventre de Paris, and the battle scene is set. It is set by the repetition of the principal descriptive words of the novel "gras" and "maigre". Just as the artists of impressionism repeatedly placed dots of color on the canvas so the literary impressionist places repeatedly certain key words on the page. When the repetition is dense enough the dots of color and the words begin to form a whole, that is, they assume clear proportions and the image is created. In Le Ventre de Paris it is the moment of the battle between the fat and the thin. The separate dots of color of the literary impressionist, that is the repeated words, do not produce a moment in the impressionist sense. Yet when viewed collectively they produce a wholly impressionistic moment, an eternal present. It is the moment of the "Maigres" constantly struggling against the "gras". This battle is summed up by Claude Lantier as follows:

--Est-ce que vous connaissez la bataille des Gras et des Maigres? demanda Claude à Florent. Florent, surpris, dit que non. Alors Claude s'enthousiasma, parla de cette série d'estampes avec beaucoup d'éloges. Il cita certains épisodes: les Gras, énormes à crever, préparant le goinferie du Soir, tandis que les Maigres, pliés par le jeun, regardent de la rue avec la mine d'échallas envieux; et encore les Gras, à table, les joues débordantes, chassant un Maigre qui a eu l'audace de s'introduire humblement, et qui ressemble à une quille au milieu d'un peuples de boules. Il voyait là tout le drame humain; il finit par classer les hommes en Maigres et en Gras, en deux groupes hostiles dont l'un dévore l'autre, s'arrondit le ventre et jouit. Pour sur, dit-il Cain était un Gras et Abel un Maigre. Depuis le premier meurtre, ce sont toujours les grosses faims qui ont sucé le sang des petits mangeurs. C'est une continuelle

ripaillé, du plus faible au plus fort, chacun avalant son voisin et se trouvant avalé à son tour. . . Voyez-vous, mon brave, défiez-vous des Gras. . . Nous sommes des Maigres, nous autres, vous comprenez. . . Moi, je souffre d'être un Maigre; si j'étais un Gras, je peindrais tranquillement, j'aurais un bel atelier, je vendrais mes tableaux au poids de l'or. Au lieu de ça, je suis un Maigre, je veux dire que je m'exterminé le tempérament à vouloir trouver des machines qui font hausser les épaules des Gras. J'en mourrai, c'est sûr, la peau collée aux os, si plat qu'on pourra me mettre entre deux feuillets d'un livre pour m'enterrer. Et vous, donc, vous êtes un Maigre surprenant, le roi des Maigres, ma parole d'honneur. Vous vous rappelez votre querelle avec les poissonnières; c'était superbe, ces gorges géantes lâchées contre votre poitrine étroite; et elles agissaient d'instinct, elles chassaient au Maigre, comme les chattes chassent aux souris. . . En principe, vous entendez, un Gras à l'horreur d'un Maigre, si bien qu'il éprouve le besoin de l'ôter de sa vue à coups de dents, ou à coups de pieds. C'est pourquoi à votre place, je prendrais des précautions. Les Quenu sont des Gras, les Meuhudin sont des Gras, enfin, vous n'avez que des Gras autour de vous. Moi, ça m'inquiéterait.

(347-49)

It is a battle which is first won by Lisa. When Florent begins eating his dinner at M. Lebigre's it is remarked:

Elle demeurait victorieuse, elle respirait à l'aise dans la salle à manger de chêne clair, avec des envies de bruler du sucre pour en chasser l'odeur perverse de maigreur qu'elle y sentait. (319)

In the end it is the "Gras" who are victorious. This concession is made by Claude Lantier as he walks in the area of the Central Markets the day following Florent's exile:

Il injuriait les Gras, il disait que les Gras avaient vaincu. Autour de lui, il ne voyait que des Gras, s'arrondissant, crevant de santé, saluant un nouveau jour de belle digestion. (500)

It is a battle which is constructed by Zola in a wholly impressionistic manner, a battle which forms the basis of the essential antithetical structure of Le Ventre de Paris.

All of the preceeding non-grammatical techniques utilized by Zola in composing Le Ventre de Paris, as well as perhaps many more, are based on techniques that were utilized by the impressionistic artists. These descriptive parallels further demonstrate the essentially impressionistic structure of Le Ventre de Paris. Zola would also demonstrate, in the portrayal of Claude Lantier, his total comprehension of the principles of Impressionism.

Although of relative unimportance in Le Ventre de Paris with regard to plot, Claude Lantier occupies a position of particular importance with regard to the theory of impressionism utilized by Zola in composing Le Ventre de Paris. For it is through Claude Lantier, a young artist living in the area of the Central Markets, that Zola expresses his total comprehension of the impressionistic aesthetic, that is, Claude Lantier is not referred to as an impressionist by Zola, yet Claude clearly demonstrates by his concept of art that he a strong advocate of the new art of the 1860's.

The importance of sunlight in art is recognized by Claude Lantier who rising early hopes to observe the sunrise on the vegetables in the "quartier des Halles":

Je suis descendu de bonne heure, me doutant qu'il y aurait un lever de soleil superbe sur ces gredins de choux. (39)

The following description of Florent and Claude walking through the area of the Central Markets further underlines the importance attributed by Claude to light in art:

A tous les pas, maintenant, ils devaient s'arreter. La marée arrivait, les camions se succédaient, charriant les hautes cages de bois pleines de bourriches, que les chemins de fer apportent toutes chargées de l'océan. Et, pour se garer des camions de la marée de plus en plus pressés et inquiétants, ils se jetaient sous les roues des camions de beurre, des oeufs et des fromages, de grands chariots jaunes, à quatre chevaux, à lanternes de couleur; des fortes enlevaient les caisses d'oeufs, les paniers de fromages et de beurre, qu'ils portaient dans le pavillon de la cirée, où des employes en casquette écrivaient sur des calepins, à la lueur du gaz. Claude était ravi de ce tumulte; il s'oubliait à un effet de lumière. (37-38)

This description continues showing a second fundamental principle of impressionistic art recognized and admired by Claude, that is, color:

Sur le carreau, à droite et à gauche, des femmes assises avaient devant elles des corbeilles carées, pleines de bottes de roses, de violets, et de marguerites. Les bottes s'assombrissaient, pareilles à des taches de sang, palissaient doucement avec des gris argentés d'un grande délicatesse. Près d'une corbeille, une bougie allumée mettait là, sur tout le noir d'alentour, une chanson aigue de couleur, les panachures vives des marguerites, le rouge saignant des dahlias, le bleuissement des violettes, les chairs vivants des roses.(38)

Claude further underlines the importance of color in impressionistic art in the following scene:

Ils causaient maintenant, en retournant sur les Halles. Claude, les mains dans les poches, sifflant, racontait son grand amour ce débordement de nourriture; qui monte au beau milieu de Paris, chaque matin. Il rôdait sur le carreau des nuits entières, rêvant des natures mortes colossales, des tableaux extraordinaires. Il en avait même commencé un; il avait fait poser son ami Marjolin et cette gueuse de Cadine; mais c'était dur, c'était trop beau, ces diables de légumes et les fruits et les poissons, et la viande! Florent écoutait, le ventre serré, cet enthousiasme d'artiste. Et il était évident que Claude, en ce moment-là, ne songeait même pas que ces belles choses se mangeaient. Il les aimait pour leur couleur. Brusquement il se tût, serra d'un mouvement qui leur était habituel la ceinture qu'il portait sous son paletot verdâtre et reprit d'un air fin: "Puis, je déjeune ici par les yeux au moins, et cela vaut encore mieux que de ne rien manger." (39-40)

A particularly strong defense of impressionistic color is given by Claude Lantier when discussing his most cherished work of art with Florent while riding in the back of Madame Francois's vegetable cart on the way to Nanterre:

Voulez-vous que je vous dise quelle a été ma plus belle oeuvre, depuis que je travaille, celle dont le souvenir

me satisfait le plus? C'est toute une histoire. . . L'année dernière, la veille de Noël, comme je me trouvais chez ma tante Lisa, le garçon de la charcuterie, Auguste, cet idiot, vous savez, était en train de faire l'étalage. Ah! le misérable! il me poussa à bout par la façon molle dont il composait son ensemble. Je le priai de s'ôter de là, en lui disant que j'allais lui peindre ça, un peu proprement. Vous comprenez, j'avais tous les tons vigoureux, le rouge des langues fourrées, le jaune des jambonneaux, le bleu des rognures de papier, le rose des pièces entamées, le vert des feuilles de bruyère, surtout le noir des boudins, un noir superbe que je n'ai jamais pu retrouver sur ma palette. Naturellement, la crépine, les saucisses, les andouilles donnaient des gris d'une grande finesse. Alors je fis une véritable oeuvre d'art. (339-40)

Utilizing these distinct and vigorous colors Claude then discusses the art of composition by color:

Je pris les plats, les assiettes, les terrines, les bocaux, je posai les tons, je dressai une nature morte étonnante, ou éclataient des pétards de couleurs, soutenus par des gammes savantes. Les langues rouges s'allongeaient avec des gourmandises de flamme, et les boudins noirs, dans le chant clair des saucisses, mettaient les ténèbres d'une indigestion formidable. J'avais peint; n'est-ce pas? la gloutonnerie du réveillon, l'heure de minuit donnée à la mangeaille, la goinfrerie des estomacs vides par les contiques. En haut une grande dinde montrait sa poitrine blanche, marbrée, sous la peau, des taches noires des truffes. C'était barbare et superbe, quelque chose comme un ventre aperçu dans une gloire, mais avec une cruauté de touche, un emportement de railleries tels que la foule s'attroupa devant la vitrine, inquiétée par cet étalage qui flambait si rudement. Quand ma tante Lisa revint de la cuisine, elle eut peur, s'imaginant que j'avais mis le feu aux graisses de la boutique. La dinde, surtout, lui parut si indécente, qu'elle me flanqua à la porte, pendant qu'Auguste rétablissait les choses, étalant sa bêtise. Jamais ces brutes ne comprendront le langage d'une tache rouge mise à côté d'une tache grise. . . N'importe, c'est mon chef-d'oeuvre. Je n'ai jamais rien fait de mieux.

(340-41)

Claude's enthusiasm for the effects of light and color on the vegetables leads him to consider the whole "quartier des Halles" as a sea in the morning light. As such Claude expresses admir-

ation for one of the favorite subjects of the impressionist artists, water:

Claude était monté debout sur le banc d'enthousiasme. Il força son compagnon à admirer le jour se levant sur les légumes. C'était une mer. Elle s'étendait de la pointe Eustache à la rue des Halles, entre les deux groupes de pavillons. Et aux deux bouts, dans les deux carrefours, le flot grandissait encore, les légumes submergeaient les pavés. Le jour se levait lentement, d'un gris très doux, lavant toutes choses d'une teinte claire d'aquarelle. Ces tas moutonnants, comme des flots presses, ce fleuve de verdure qui semblait couler dans l'encaissement de la chaussée, pareil à la débacle des pluies d'automne, prenaient des ombres délicates et perlées, des violets attendris, des roses teintées de lait, des verts noyés dans des jaunes, toutes les pâleurs qui font du ciel une soie changeante au lever du soleil. (45)

Claude, as did the impressionists, admired the simple and the everyday. In the following example Claude expresses his preference for
 erence for veal lungs to Greek goddesses:

Vers le soir, entre quatre et cinq heures, Cadine et Marjolin étaient sûrs de rencontrer Claude à la vente en gras des mous de boeuf. Il était là, au milieu des voitures des tripiers acculées aux trottoirs, dans la foule des hommes en bourgerons bleus et en tabliers blancs, bousculé, les oreilles cassées par les offres faites à voix haute; mais il ne sentait pas même les coups de coude, il demeurait en extase en face des grands mous pendus aux crocs de la criée. Il expliqua souvent à Cadine et à Marjolin que rien n'était plus beau. Les mous étaient d'un rose tendre, s'accentuant peu à peu, borde, en bas, de carmin vif, et il les disait en satin moire, ne trouvant pas de mot pour peindre cette douceur soyeuse, ces longues allées fraîches, ces chairs légères qui retombaient à larges plis, comme des jupes accrochées de danseuses. Il parlait de gaze, de dentelle laissant voir la hanche d'une jolie femme. Quand un coup de soleil, tombant sur les grands mous, leur mettait une ceinture d'or, Claude pâme, était plus heureux que s'il eût vu défilier les nudités des déesses grecques et les robes de brocart des chatelaines romantiques. (298-99)

Claude's preoccupation with light and color and their effect on

what in many instances appears to be water, as well as his coloring technique and his love for everyday reality, announces the impressionistic school of art in Le Ventre de Paris. In the following scene Claude announces a new art, which, although not given a name, is very clearly impressionistic art:

Il rêva longtemps un tableau colossal. Cadine et Marjolin s'aimant au milieu des Halles Centrales, dans les légumes, dans la maree, dans la viande; il les aurait assis sur leur lit de nourriture, les bras à la taille, échangeant le baiser idyllique. Et il voyait là un manifeste artistique, le positivisme de l'art, l'art moderne, tout expérimentale et tout matérialiste; il y voyait encore une satire de la peinture à idées, un soufflet donné aux vieilles écoles. . . il annonçait un art original qu'il sentait venir. (298-99)

Claude further demonstrated his enthusiasm for the new art by clearly showing his preference for Les Halles to the Eglise Saint-Eustache. Les Halles becomes, in effect, the new church; it is there that the new art will grow and develop:

En passant devant la rue de la Roule, il avait regardé ce portail latéral de Saint-Eustache, qu'on voit de loin par-dessous le hanger géant d'une rue couverte des Halles. Il y revenait sans cesse, voulait y trouver un symbole. C'est une curieuse rencontre, disait-il, ce bout d'église encadré sous cette avenue de fonte. . . Ceci tuera cela, le fer tuera la pierre et les temps sont proches. Est-ce que vous croyez au hasard, vous, Florent? Je m'imaginais que le besoin de l'alignement n'a pas seul mis de cette façon une rosace de Saint-Eustache au beau milieu des Halles Centrales. Voyez-vous, il y a là tout un manifeste, c'est l'art moderne, le réalisme, le naturalisme, comme vous voudrez l'appeler, qui a grandi en face de l'art ancien. Cette église est d'une architecture batarde, d'ailleurs, le Moyen Age y agonise et la Renaissance y balbutie. Avez-vous remarqué quelles églises on nous bâtit aujourd'hui? Ça ressemble à tout ce qu'on veut, à des bibliothèques, à des observatoires, à des pigeonnières, à des casernes; mais sûrement personne n'est convaincu que le bon Dieu demeure là-dedans. Les maçons du bon Dieu sont morts,

la grande sagesse serait de ne plus construire ces laides carcasses de pierre, où nous n'avons personne à loger. Depuis le commencement du siècle, on n'a bâti qu'un seul monument original, un monument qui ne soit copié nulle part, qui ait poussé naturellement dans le sol de l'époque; ce sont les Halles Centrales, entendez-vous, Florent, une oeuvre de crâne, allez, et qui n'est encore qu'une révélation timide du vingtième siècle. C'est pourquoi Saint-Eustache est là-bas avec sa rosace, vide de son peuple dévot, tandis que les Halles s'élargissent à côté, toute bourdonnantes de vie. Voilà ce que je vois, mon brave! (310)

Claude Lantier is then without question, an impressionistic artist. The concept of art expressed by Claude demonstrates clearly that Zola fully understood not only the stylistics of impressionism as was demonstrated in the first two sections of this chapter, but also the impressionistic aesthetic.

CONCLUSION

The aesthetic phenomena of literary naturalism and artistic impressionism are then, it can be argued, synonymous. Both of these movements in the creative arts flourished in France during the decade 1870-1880. It is a decade traditionally considered by art historians as characterized by the impressionistic aesthetic; at the same time it is considered by literary historians as characterized by the naturalistic aesthetic. As such the decade 1870-1880 appears at the outset as an historical period characterized by two equally important and distinct movements in the creative arts. As has been demonstrated in this thesis the decade 1870-1880 is characterized by only one aesthetic, that of impressionism. The apparent aesthetic contradiction moreover results in the creation of an eternal moment in the creative arts. It is an eternal moment in the creative arts in that both the impressionistic artists and Emile Zola utilized in the creation of art the impressionistic aesthetic and demonstrated that such an aesthetic was a valid base for the creation of art.

Stylistically, literary naturalism and artistic impressionism are also synonymous. The technique utilized by Emile Zola to represent verbally the reality he observed and documented is wholly that technique which was utilized by the principal artists of impressionism to refashion reality aesthetically. It is a

technique which in fact overrides Emile Zola's naturalistic thesis, a thesis founded on the desire to represent reality objectively without the subjective intervention of the author either directly or through the technique utilized in composition. The naturalistic thesis of Emile Zola is however overridden in a large part by the highly subjective impressionistic technique which Zola utilized as a means of aesthetically refashioning reality. It is an identical technique which was recognized by Zola in impressionistic art, a technique which Zola acclaimed throughout the decade during which impressionism fought the traditional academy jury. Zola, in praising the impressionistic technique, severely criticized the reality represented therein as naive, optimistic and idealized. Impressionism, in short, became the scapegoat of the generation of 1870, a generation which had initially acclaimed the art of impressionism but which in the 1870's would or could no longer accept sensationalism as as basis for art. The material prosperity of the early years of the Third Republic resulted in a general societal hysteria, a hysteria of self congratulation induced by the significant technical and scientific accomplishments of a generation innondated with scientism and the scientific method. It was a society which acclaimed the pursuit of objective truth as its primary objective. The purely aesthetic objective of impressionism had in short been supplanted by a didactic objective; an objective which was most significantly represented by the prose productions of Emile Zola. That society did not, however, in any instance,

reject the impressionistic technique which was utilized by Zola to accomplish his naturalistic objective.

Just as the art of impressionism had been the scapegoat of the generation of 1870, so did naturalism become the scapegoat of the generation of 1880. That society, which had ten years earlier acclaimed Zola and his naturalistic thesis, reacted in 1880 adversely to the materialistic and scientific philosophy of naturalism. Hauser remarks:

The curious thing was that at a time when naturalism already seemed to have won the day it was attacked with such bitterness. What was it that people would not forgive in naturalism or pretended not to be able to forgive. Naturalism it was asserted was an delicate, indecent and obscene art, the expression of an insipid materialistic philosophy, the instrument of a clumsy heavy-handed democratic propaganda, a collection of boring trivia, and vulgar banalities, a representation of reality which in its portrayal of society described only the wild, ravenous, undisciplined animal in man and only his works of destruction--the dissolution of human relationships, the undermining of the family, the nation and religion, in short, it was destructive, unnatural, and hostile to life.¹¹⁵

Naturalism was then denied existence by the very group which had ten years earlier acclaimed it as the fullest representation of that society's materialistic objectives. Yet just as the principal critics of impressionistic art had not denied or criticized the impressionistic technique so the critics of naturalism did not deny or criticize the technique of naturalism. In both instances the technique utilized is identical--it is the impressionistic technique. In both instances it was not found unsuitable for the creation of art, even though the ideologies expressed utilizing this technique were criticized

¹¹⁵Hauser, p. 882.

severely. It is a technique which was subsequently adopted and utilized by the principal symbolist poets, who accepted neither the impressionistic nor the naturalistic ideology, but at the same time utilized their technique of composition. Hauser underlines this point as follows:

Symbolism with its optical and accoustic effects, as well as the mixing and combining of different sense data and the reciprocal action between the various art forms, above all, what Mallarme understood by the "reconquest from music of the property of poetry", is impressionistic.¹¹⁶

The symbolists at the same time developed to their highest level the figurative techniques that impressionism utilized as a basis of description, primarily the metaphor.

Symbolism represents the final result of the development which began with romanticism, that is the discovery of the metaphor as the germ cell of poetry and which led to the richness of impressionistic imagery.¹¹⁷

A preoccupation with the momentary quality of reality was similarly adopted by the symbolist poets, primarily Mallarme. It is the result of the prevalent negativism of the generation out of which symbolism emerged. This negativism produced a societal attitude that is not unlike that which was produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in France by the final impact of the Enlightenment. In other words, the dominant negativism of the generation of Emile Zola and that of the generation of the French Revolution produced in the following generations an exaggerated idealism or romanticism. Hauser states:

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 896.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 896.

The mood of crisis leads to a renewal of the idealistic and mystical trends and produces a reaction against the prevailing pessimism, a strong tide of faith. It is only in the course of this development that impressionism looses its connection with naturalism and becomes transformed, especially in literature, into a new romanticism.¹¹⁸

The romanticism of which Hauser speaks is unquestionably symbolism.

Whereas the romantic poets of the early years of the nineteenth century, when confronted with situations endangering their idealized conception of reality, sought refuge in physical movement or flight, in an attempt to confront a significant past moment in their existence, the symbolists sought refuge in the moment itself. It is a type of internal movement. The flight into the moment of the symbolists when represented poetically represents a non-discursive representation of reality. It is a voyage into the unknown and the pure. The sensual moment of the impressionists was thereby transformed into the moment of poetic creation which serves as the key to a non-discursive and pure realm beyond the scope of sensual evidence and experimentation. In so doing the symbolist poets elevated the figurative language of impressionism to its highest level in that the metaphor had been liberated from an obligation to represent reality discursively. Hauser states:

Mallarme's generation discovered the difference between symbol and allegory and made symbolism as a poetic style the conscious aim of its endeavors. It recognized even though it was not always able to give expression to its insight that allegory is nothing but the translation of an abstract idea into the form of a concrete image, whereby the idea continues to a certain extent to be independant of its metaphorical expression and

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 167

could also be expressed in another form, whereas the symbol brings the idea and the image into an invisible unity, so that the transformation of the image also implies the metamorphosis of the idea. In short, the content of a symbol cannot be translated into any other form, but a symbol can, on the other hand, be interpreted in various ways and this variability of the interpretation, the apparent inexhaustibility of the meaning of the symbol, is its most essential characteristic.¹¹⁹

What Mallarmé and the symbolist poets had done was to remove the cathedral from Monet's canvas. Monet's canvas is then no longer an allegorical representation of reality. When the cathedral is taken away there remains a type of residue which was in fact the principal material of both impressionism and symbolism. Impressionism, however, needed the discursive cathedral. Mallarmé, on the other hand, was carried into the realm of the impressionistic residue without the discursive cathedral. Allegorical interpretation was then no longer possible. To the symbolist poets the impressionistic residue was purified language. "The poet must," as Mallarmé intimates, "give way to the initiative of the words"; he must allow himself to be borne along by the current of language, by the spontaneous succession of images and visions which implies that language is not only more poetic but also more philosophical than reason."¹²⁰ Language in other words is a dynamic process. The restrictions imposed by reason are identical to those imposed on the Rouen Cathedral in Monet's canvas. Yet just as the variations on an impression-

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 897

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 196

istic allegorical motif are limitless, so too are the interpretations made possible by the dynamic process which is symbolist language. In both instances it is an identical technique.

It becomes increasingly apparent that the principles of art are valuable in the study of literature. It has been through the study of the aesthetic and stylistic principles of impressionistic art that it has been possible to determine that Emile Zola, the principal naturalistic novelist of nineteenth century France, is also an impressionistic novelist. These principles similarly provide a basis for the hypothesis that literary symbolism is also founded on the aesthetics and stylistics of artistic impressionism, an hypothesis which can only be verified by an examination of symbolist poetry using as a means of elucidation the aesthetic and stylistic principles of art that characterized that particular historical period.

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